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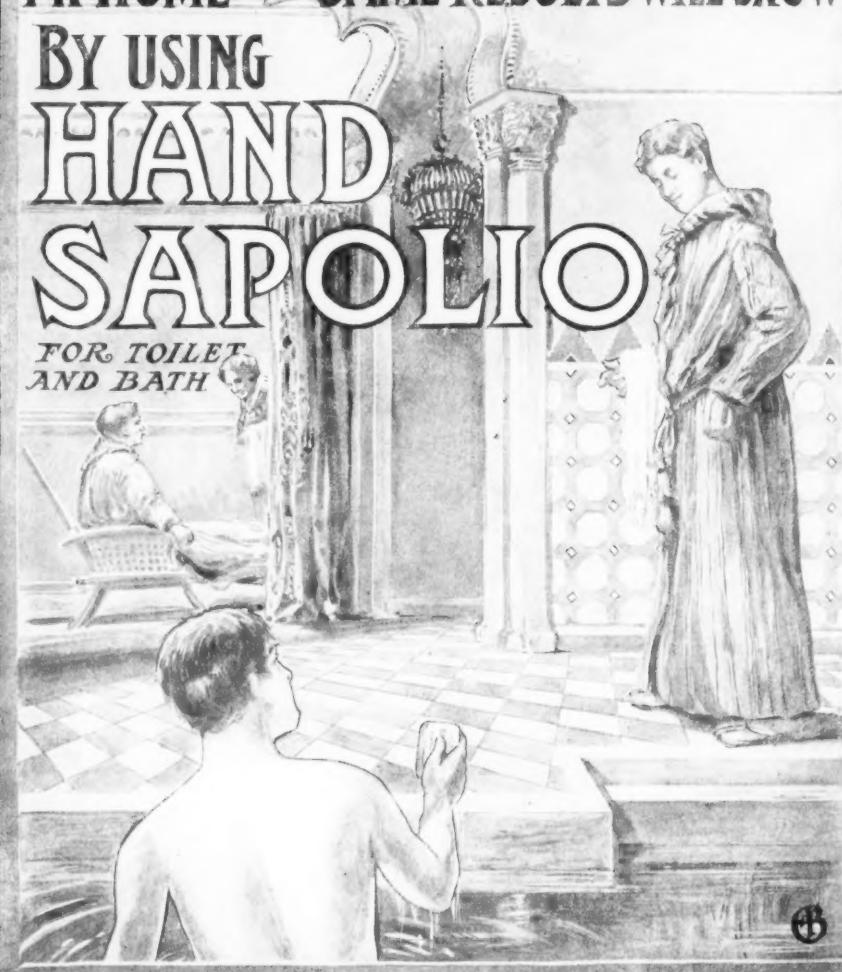
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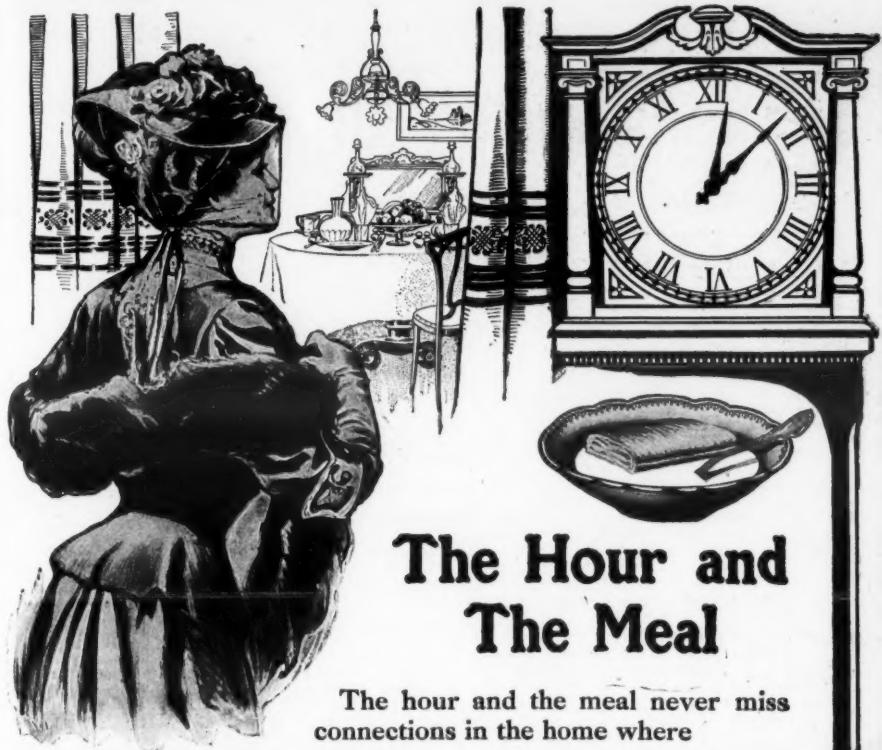
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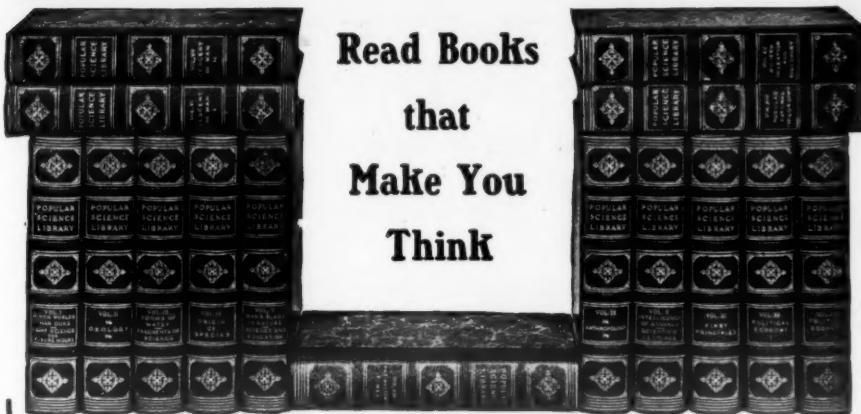
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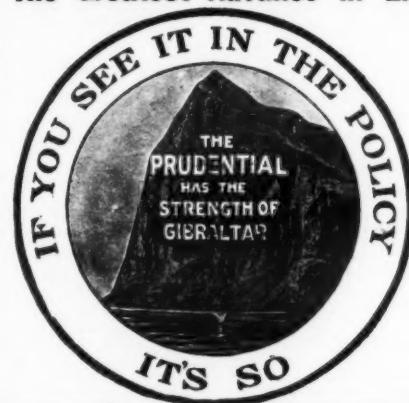
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THE FIFTH ROBBERY

By Henry Gallup Paine



CHAPTER I.

WELL?" I asked, as Fenway came into our study that April afternoon from his trip to Ardsley. "What luck? Is it going to be hard or easy?"

"Easy, from the look of it," he replied, tossing me a list of names on a double sheet of foolscap. "Too easy, perhaps," he continued. "While it is always a good rule to distrust the obvious, at the same time it is foolish to hunt about for mysteries just because the way seems plain and open. What do you see in it?" he asked, as I took up the paper he had thrown on the table and glanced over the names of "those present" at Mrs. Martin-Chester's dinner-dance the night before. I read down the first column and into the next—all well-known people of fashion and wealth—and then: "Why do you stop?" asked Fenway, whose sharp eyes had been quick to note that mine had paused for a fraction of a second as they ran over the list.

"Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Murchison," I read aloud. "Again?" I queried, looking up into my friend's face. "Suspicious, yes," I added; "but he has been

suspected before. Have you anything definite this time? And, by the way, who is Mrs. Lionel Murchison?"

Fenway gave one of his inscrutable smiles. "No, to the first part of your question," he replied. "As to your 'by the way,' I don't know as yet. Frankly, however, I shall be surprised if she is other than I believe her to be. Here are some other notes," he went on, "which it may interest you to look over, as you classify and file them. Tell me what you think when you have finished."

He touched the electric button to notify Garvin that he had returned and would soon be ready for dinner, and went into his room.

Some one has written of Lincoln that his "mind was orderly, though his methods were not"; that "he neglected details, because his thought, which was 'as direct as light,' passed instantly to the vital spot, and all else seemed unimportant." This might with equal truth have been written of Fenway. But he recognized the value of system, and especially the necessity of having some one other than himself attend to the details. That was where I came in. It was a very informal arrangement between us. Fenway supplied the sinews of war for our joint establishment, and

I gave him assistance where he needed it most. For the rest, my wants were few, and were readily supplied by my pen. I found my imagination helpfully stimulated by the strange events that came to my knowledge through my association with this lightning-minded investigator of crimes and mysteries.

The story that I have now been moved to set down, however, owes nothing of its interest to my poor imagination. It is an exact recital of facts, which illustrate not only Fenway's quick perception and his ready grasp of the essential factors of a given problem, but also his remarkable insight into human nature. It will serve, as well, to give something more than a glimpse at his methods, and to demonstrate the power he was able to exercise over others through his understanding and appraisal of their characters.

The unusual nature of the events brought to light in the brief but comprehensive investigation here related, however, is my chief excuse for giving this narrative to the public. There is no particular lesson to be drawn from it. I shall refrain from any comment on the actions and motives of the chief actors in the drama herein unfolded, leaving them to present their own excuses for, and justification of, their conduct. I shall put forward in their behalf no claim to the sympathy of the reader, leaving each one to form his own judgment as to the temptations which led them to play their respective parts in the complicated scenario, the climax to which was so deftly supplied by my associate.

This is not a tale of injured innocence, of vice punished and virtue rewarded; but simply a revelation of the curious results produced when individuals elect for any reason to step out of their own rôles and to engage in enterprises foreign to their accustomed habit of life. Such procedure initially involves dissimulation, deceit, and misrepresentation; possibly injury to others, and certainly violence to their own standards. It may, and generally does, lead to the commission of acts never contemplated at the outset, and re-

gretted even before they are perpetrated.

As I jot down this preamble, I see that I was, perhaps, inaccurate in saying that no moral attaches to the peculiar history that follows. If there is one, it is merely incidental, and to point it is far from my purpose in writing.

The case upon which Fenway had suddenly been called away that morning promised nothing unusual in the bare outlines that came to him over the long-distance telephone. There had been a dance at the Martin-Chesters' country-place at Ardsley the night before, one of the first of the post-Lenten gaieties. Mrs. Martin-Chester had worn a dazzling diamond tiara when she welcomed her guests. When the time came for her to bid them farewell it had disappeared.

Of course, the first, perhaps the last, idea was that it had fallen off. For any one to have taken it off without her knowledge or without being observed by others seemed too unlikely to be considered seriously. But if it had fallen off, where was it? Mrs. Martin-Chester had not been away from the drawing-room floor the entire evening; and the most careful search, in which every one joined as soon as the loss was noticed, failed to reveal the conspicuous bauble on that floor, or anywhere else in the house, which was ransacked from attic to cellar.

The obvious conclusion was that some one had found it and secreted it, either before or after the announcement was made that the jewels were missing. Suspicion, which could not ordinarily be expected to attach to the guests, and would naturally fall upon the servants, had in this instance uncomfortably taken a different direction.

Further than this Mr. Martin-Chester had been unwilling to explain over the wire; but he had deemed the matter of sufficient moment to secure the services of the most expert and diplomatic criminal investigator in the United States. Such had been the tenor of the message that summoned Fenway from his breakfast-table.

On the face of it, the problem was

not one to appeal to him. Ordinarily he would have declined to lend his genius to so commonplace a casualty. It was apparently a simple case for the police, one quite within their powers, and with such he was not wont to interfere.

What served to arouse his interest, however, was the general resemblance that the incident bore to four strange disappearances of jewels that had occurred two years before. In each instance valuable, in one case almost priceless, gems had been similarly spirited away during crowded entertainments; and the marvel of it was that neither the missing property nor the thief or thieves had ever been discovered.

It may be well to state that in none of these other affairs had Fenway been consulted. Four almost identical robberies in one New York season, and then nothing of the same sort for two years, either in that city or elsewhere, so far as my carefully kept records of important police cases revealed!

The close likeness between all four of the previous robberies, and the fact of their occurring so near together, pointed naturally to the operations of a single hand. The affair at the Martin-Chesters' aroused suspicion that the same hand was again at work. There was, then, more in the case than appeared upon the surface. There was an opportunity for Fenway to succeed where others had signally failed, which appealed to his professional pride. There was the possibility of finding himself pitted against a daring, unusual, and brilliantly successful criminal. And this, after all, was what most appealed to him—the measuring of his powers against the perversely sharpened faculties of the intellectual princes of the underworld of graft.

Knowing all this, I had scarcely been surprised when Fenway, after telling me the purport of the message, had hurried off to catch the nine-thirty train to Ardsley. Had I at that time known all that he knew, I could even better have understood the glow of enthusiasm which had animated his countenance—

always a mask to others, but usually open and expressive of his feelings when alone with me—as he had glanced at his watch, seized his hat and top-coat, and bade me good-by for the day.

"What do you make of it?" he asked, when dinner was over and we had returned to the study for our coffee and cigars. Fenway never allowed any thought of his work to intrude upon the time devoted to eating. "Let this hallowed hour with better thought be spent," he had not irreverently quoted the first time I had broken in with some remark about one of his cases at dinner, and since then I had known that "shop" was taboo during meals.

"Judging from the little you were able to learn at Ardsley," I answered, "I think it would pay to keep a sharp eye on Mr. Lionel Murchison."

"On what grounds?" It was a favorite practise of Fenway to draw me out in this manner less for the purpose of educating me, which would have been a hopeless task, than apparently to get his own ideas more firmly ordered in his mind.

"On the ground that he was the only person present last evening who was also present on the occasions of the four similar jewel robberies two years ago. It would be absurd to ascribe such a series of coincidences to chance."

"Very true," was Fenway's comment; "yet simple coincidences happen. I have known the little ball to fall into the double zero four times running at roulette."

"Yes, and that is a good time to look out for trickery in the wheel," I replied.

"True again," said Fenway; "yet I shall be inclined to view this as a purely accidental and insignificant coincidence, unless I find that Mrs. Lionel Murchison is the person I suspect her to be." With this Delphic utterance, Fenway leaned back in his armchair and gave himself up to the seemingly absorbing occupation of blowing smoke wreaths through his lips from a newly lighted Carolina perfecto.

"Those caps," he said at last, "might

have given the opportunity, if the tiara was actually taken from Mrs. Martin-Chester's hair."

I knew from Fenway's notes that he referred to the dainty silken head-gear concealed in some bonbons used as favors in the cotillion. One of these had coquettishly adorned the hostess' dark locks for nearly two hours, effectively concealing the diamond circlet. She herself had no recollection of removing the cap, which was found on the floor of the conservatory.

"I made a memorandum, did I not?" Fenway asked, "to question the finder? He was one of the waiters. I called up the caterer on the telephone, but, outside of learning that the man was an extra hand, I got little satisfaction from him. He pooh-poohed the idea that the fellow could throw any light on the mystery. He was, it seemed to me, unnecessarily vehement in protesting the ignorance, innocence, and uprightness of a man whose address he professed not to be able to remember. However, he promised to get it, and to send it to me. If it does not come in the morning's mail, there will be the greater incentive to go after it. I should not be surprised if the interview were productive of interesting results. In the meantime, it might be advisable to add to my notes," he suggested, as if it were an afterthought, "that it was Mrs. Lionel Murchison who first called Mrs. Martin-Chester's attention to the fact that she was no longer wearing her tiara."

"And Mrs. Lionel Murchison was—is—"

"Just what I now hope to find out. Did you ever hear why Plimpton Rogers resigned from the police force?"

"No," I answered.

"I don't believe you ever did," said Fenway, with that odd smile of his. "I don't think he confided in any one but me; and I have kept his secret. Did you ever venture on a surmise?"

"I always supposed he resigned out of chagrin at having failed to ferret out the mystery of the four jewel robberies two years ago. I know that he

tried to connect Murchison with them, and failed."

"That's all right so far as it goes. You're a pretty good guesser," laughed Fenway. "There's a lot more to it. It's a queer tale. You'd enjoy hearing it. Perhaps Rogers will tell it to you." The door-bell rang. Fenway looked at his watch. "There he is now, ask him."

Almost instantly Garvin announced "Mr. Rogers." The famous ex-detective entered, and, after the first hearty greetings, said: "I saw the evening papers. Things begin to look interesting again. How can I serve you? I hope you'll have better luck than I had. He was there?"

Fenway gave an affirmative nod.

"I supposed," continued Rogers, "that was the reason for your asking me to call here to-night. You may count on me all the time. I sure owe him one; but payment will have to be made through you. Now what can I do?"

"Tell Walford here who Mrs. Lionel Murchison is."

"So he's married! And the lady is—?"

"That is the information we are counting on getting from you. Are you in a position to inform us?"

"You can search me," said Rogers.

"Why not?" laughed Fenway. "The investigation may prove more profitable than you seem to imagine. By way of shedding a little light on the subject, won't you tell Walford how you came to resign from the force? It may help us just where we need it most."

"Oh, you tell him, if you wish to," protested Rogers. "It's not a tale I'd be proud to repeat. And you don't want to hear it again."

"Well, I'd have to hear it if I told it, wouldn't I?" said Fenway. "You tell him. I'd like to hear the story a second time from you. You'll be sure to tell it differently, and I may learn something new that will prove useful in the present case."

"Very well," acquiesced Rogers, with a sigh. "You see, Mr. Walford, it was this way."

CHAPTER II.

"I needn't tell you," Rogers began, "how I fell down on the loss of Mrs. Casper Vander Poel's pearl necklace. It was on her neck the night of her daughter's coming-out ball, and then it wasn't. And that was all that I or anybody could make of it, except the fact that she was dancing with Lionel Murchison at the time. There was a hunt high and low; the servants and Murchison were questioned, pawnshops searched, jewelers notified, and Murchison watched, all to no purpose. It was a mystery, it is a mystery, and as such I was finally compelled to regard it.

Murchison was as unlikely a person to be involved in a jewel robbery as any one you could imagine. He was of good family, had been left a comfortable fortune, yet lived simply, and had no unduly expensive habits. He was popular at his clubs, and with women. If not exactly in the 'Four Hundred,' he was on terms of friendship with many who so counted themselves, and was often seen at their entertainments. He kept a hunter or two, a few polo-ponies, played golf passably and a good deal of the time, and had a small sloop-yacht in commission the summers he wasn't abroad. He had never engaged in business, though he occasionally took a flier in stocks in a small way, but otherwise seemed content to accommodate his tastes to his fortunes. Apparently he got a lot of enjoyment out of life without trying to compete with the richer men with whom he traveled, and who knew him as a good fellow, a straightforward, honorable gentleman and sportsman.

"Such was his reputation; yet, in spite of it, he was watched, as I said before, though neither he nor his friends were allowed to suspect it. You might as well have watched a lamp-post for anything that he did to lend color to the idea that he was a jewel-thief.

"Well, I'd called off the spotters and given up the case in disgust, when the Central Office was notified of the disap-

pearance of Mrs. Whiting's diamond stomacher the night she gave that big reception to the German ambassador and his wife. It was as like the Vander Poel affair as one pea is to another. She had it on, and then it was gone. And gone it was, and never a trace of it to this day. I was assigned to the case, as it looked so like the other, with the hope that, by putting two and two together, I might make something out of it—four, perhaps, or maybe twenty-two; but it was 'twenty-three,' and no mistake, for me.

"Naturally, one of my first moves was to find out if any of the people at the Whitings' had also been at the Vander Poels'. Well, there was Murchison for one; and there were seventeen more to keep him company. He had done nothing, so far as I could discover, to warrant me in suspecting him rather than any of the others. I followed the same course as before, and with the same results—or lack of them. Only, this time, I set no special watch on Murchison. I had become convinced from what I had learned of his life that he was the last man in the world to be guilty of such an act.

"I wasn't adding to my reputation for sleuthing, you may well imagine, that winter, and I asked the chief for the next 'hard one,' to give me a chance to vindicate myself. It came within six weeks; and it was another pea out of the same pod. You remember it all right, and the excitement it created, coming so soon after the other affairs—the loss of Miss Anstruther's Bonaparte bracelet. It had belonged to the Empress Eugénie, and it was considered very beautiful and valuable. It had been purchased by old Simeon Anstruther at a time when the exiled empress needed ready money, and he had left it to his granddaughter; and, though the Anstruthers are far less wealthy than they were, nothing short of starvation would have induced Miss Laura to part with it. She did part with it, all right, at the Westchester Country Club ball, and with nothing to show for it but a lot of free advertising in the newspapers.

"The bracelet was on her arm, she remembered, when she went into the supper-room with Dexter Pennington. There was the usual crush around the tables; and by the time Pennington had found her a seat and brought her something to eat, the Napoleonic heirloom had vanished!

"Laura Anstruther was not the person to keep quiet under such a calamity. A regular hue and cry was raised. The guests were asked to leave the room while the floor was searched. The trains of all the women's dresses were examined, to see if the bracelet had, perhaps, caught in the lace; the servants were rounded up and searched, and no end of annoyance and indignation created.

"I was on the spot early the next morning, and, of course, I wanted to know who was there. I had my two other lists with me, and a comparison of the three showed me that four of the Country Club guests had been at Mrs. Vander Poel's, three at the Whittings' reception, and just one at both those entertainments—and that one was Mr. Lionel Murchison!

"I felt as if I had my bird raised at last. Still, it was a delicate matter to handle. I had not the slightest bit of real evidence against him. I ventured to speak to one of the officers of the club about the matter, and he nearly knocked me down. He himself had been at the reception to the German ambassador, and he asked me if my suspicions included him? He refused to listen to me unless Murchison was present, too, and I did not think the time was ripe for that. It was with difficulty that I induced him to promise to say nothing to Murchison until I was ready to talk to him.

"Miss Anstruther was less reticent. She is a hot-tempered, impulsive young woman, and was prepared to suspect any one and every one, except, apparently, Murchison. I almost believe she would have perjured herself if she had thought that she could thereby have recovered what was evidently her dearest possession.

"She talked freely of her doings pre-

vious to missing the bracelet, and herself volunteered the information that she had been in the palm-room with Murchison just before going into supper. Murchison had taken her in there to show her the fountain; but it was not working, so he turned it on to let her see how pretty it looked. He turned it on too far, and the water spattered all over her. She knew she had the bracelet on at the time, because Murchison had wiped the drops from her dress and from her arm with his handkerchief. The water was very cold, and her arm felt like ice, she said, so they went back into the ballroom, where it was warmer.

"There she met Dexter Pennington, who took her to supper. The bracelet was still on her arm when Murchison had left her, because her arm still felt so cold that she had pulled up her long glove, which had slipped down, passing it under the bracelet. The bracelet was on firm at the time.

"I made an opportunity to speak to Murchison, as being the last person to be with Miss Anstruther before she discovered her loss, and he told me the same story. He had noticed her pulling up her glove as he turned to go into the club office to consult a time-table. He said he was still in the office when word was brought that the bracelet was lost.

"Then I asked the clerk what he knew of the affair, and he told me that he was talking to Murchison about the morning trains to town when he first heard of it, and that Murchison had said that this was the third instance of the kind that had come under his personal observation that season, and that there was something very peculiar about it. The clerk also said that Murchison expressed the hope that the bracelet would be shortly found, and that the police would succeed in clearing up the mystery.

"I asked the clerk how long he had been talking to Murchison, and he said five or ten minutes. That seemed to establish a pretty good alibi for Murchison; but I determined to keep him under close observation, nevertheless, and

I did; but I discovered nothing. I never saw any one who acted less as if he had something to conceal. He went and came just as he was accustomed to do; frequented only his usual haunts, and lived in the most open manner.

"One of my men got friendly with his valet, and managed to get me into his rooms when both master and man were out. We made a thorough search of the apartment without finding either the jewels or anything else in the least compromising. Of course, I'm leaving out all mention of the other investigations we made, all of which also brought us nowhere.

"Two weeks went by, and then Murchison wrote a letter to the *Evening Post*, complaining of the inaction and incompetence of the police. He said he wrote because all three of these mysterious disappearances of valuable gems had happened at places where he had been present, but that he was still waiting to hear that the Central Office had accomplished anything, and so forth and so on—a typical 'indignant citizen' communication. He did not sign his name, merely his initials. I guessed that some of the people he knew had been making unpleasant remarks about the coincidence, and that he had taken this way to set himself straight. Those that knew him would recognize his initials, and the world at large would be none the wiser.

"It seemed a bold stroke if he was guilty, yet one that an innocent man, under the circumstances, might well make. Thinking the matter over, I came to the conclusion that if he was guilty, there would be no more jewel robberies at evening entertainments for some time; at least, where Mr. Lionel Murchison was present; so, after consulting with the chief, I drew off the men who had been detailed to watch him, though I kept in general touch with him through the man who had made friends with his valet. About this time Murchison got mixed up in an automobile accident, and spent several weeks in the hospital, so that he was off my mind, anyhow.

"Then, like a thunderbolt after a dead

calm, came the Belding robbery on Riverside Drive. It was the biggest sensation in years, and, so far as I know, unique. For all that, it bore in its main features an unmistakable resemblance to the three preceding affairs, only it was as much bolder as it was bigger. It was, in fact, the climax, and it gave the whole game away. I mean in this way. In each of the other cases there was always the possibility—you might say always the probability—that the jewels had been insecurely fastened on, and had fallen off or been knocked off by accident, and then had so appealed to the cupidity of the finder that he or she had, on the impulse of the moment, concealed them. This invariably tended to throw suspicion on the servants.

"It was only the triple recurrence of the same or a similar set of circumstances that gave color to the suspicion, even to the belief, that all three were the carefully planned work of an accomplished and daring thief, and one moving in the best society of the city at that. For, say what you like, the majority of people, and servants no less than masters, are honest; at least in the obvious affairs of life. Jewels might be lost accidentally at a party once, even twice, in a winter, and have fallen into the hands of weak or dishonest persons. But the chances are all against its happening three times hand-running.

"Now, in the Belding affair, the element of accident was entirely absent. You recollect the circumstances. The Beldings are what those people who remember the names of their grandfathers, if they happened to have money, call 'noovo reach.' I think it's French. But they had diamonds enough to sink a ship. Where they got them nobody seemed to know, for the gems were as old-fashioned in their settings as they were magnificent in themselves. I guess they bought them, all right. Belding could have floated a fleet of ships in oil, and oil means money, if it is only sixteen cents a gallon.

"Still, it wasn't like Belding, or his wife, for that matter, to buy anything second-hand. Perhaps they thought

the antique jewelry helped to take the curse off the crude oil. Be that as it may, they gave a ball; and there were plenty to go to it, if most of them did live west of Central Park.

"And Mrs. Belding wore the second-hand family jewelry, every bit of it. She was cased in diamonds and pearls and emeralds and rubies and sapphires like one of those old knights in armor. She stood at the door receiving, and every now and then turning around so the folks could see on her back the pieces she hadn't had room to pin on in front; and she had more room there than most folks. The sparklers glittered in her hair and in her ears and on her arms. The Goddess of Liberty on Fourth of July wasn't a marker to her. I know it because I was there, and in my official capacity.

"Old Belding had asked for the loan of a man from the detective bureau. The chief didn't see his way clear to grant the request, but passed the note over to me, and asked if I could suggest anybody, and what was my day off? I said I knew the very man, and that my day off was Tuesday, but would he let me change to Friday the following week? So we fixed it that way. I called on Mr. Belding and explained how matters stood, and he said 'all right,' and would I bring a woman detective to act as maid in the ladies' dressing-room.

"I said I would; for I had my eye on the very party for the work.

"Then Belding let on that his wife had invited Murchison to go to the ball, and that when he had heard she was going to wear the jewels, he had called on her and said she ought to send for a couple of detectives, a man and a woman, on account of all the robberies that had taken place that winter. Murchison had told her that he was so nervous after having been present at all three of them that, personally, he was unwilling to go to a place where there was likely to be a display of gems, unless he felt that he was protected by the presence of an officer.

"He seemed to have been very frank about his own feelings and very so-

licitous about the safety of the Beldings' property. At any rate, he had got the old lady so worked up that she very nearly decided not to wear the jewels at all; but, as they were evidently her principal reason for giving the ball, she finally compromised by taking his advice.

"You may believe I did some tall thinking when I left Belding's office, and went up-town to see his wife and to look over the house. Whether Murchison was innocent or guilty, it seemed a queer thing for him to do. If he was innocent, it would have been easier and pleasanter for him to stay away than to give such a song and dance to the Beldings. They didn't move in his set; he would see few of his friends there, and he wasn't so hard put for social diversion that it would have broken his heart to miss the show.

"On the other hand, if he was guilty, what was his game? Was he posing for the benefit of the Beldings or of the police? If he had no 'plant' on, the precaution seemed pointless; and if he intended to make a haul, he was adding unnecessarily to the danger.

"Now, you must understand that whatever doubts I sometimes allowed myself to have in the bottom of my heart, I was acting on the theory that the man *was* guilty. In fact, it was the only theory that would hold water. I finally came to the conclusion that he simply wished to protect himself; that he had no designs upon the jewels, but that he was afraid some imitator might think it a good opportunity to try his hand. If Murchison was there, of course it would look bad for him. Then, again, why did he go? If the jewels were stolen, and he wasn't there, it would be the best thing for him that could happen. Whatever way I looked at it I got no satisfaction, but I determined to keep my eyes open, and one of them on Murchison.

"One thing I was pretty sure of, and that was that he had been working the game alone. I had seen all the servants and outside help at all the other places, and I could not discover that he was in touch with any of them. In fact, there

had been no necessity for an outside man, so far as I could see or reason it out."

CHAPTER III.

"On the night of the Belding ball I was on hand early with my lady assistant," Rogers continued. "I wore my dress clothes, and was supposed to be Mrs. Belding's cousin from the West. Miss Marcy wore a neat black gown, with a little white cap and broad collar and cuffs, such as trained nurses wear; and that was just what she was. Of course, there are no female detectives on the force, and I have little use for the class of women that work for the private agencies. I'd about as soon engage 'Broad-gage Molly' or 'Silver Sal,' or any other well-known lady crook, to help me on such a job. What I needed was some one whom I could trust, who had brains, and yet who was so accustomed to rendering service that she would not be suspected to be different from what she appeared.

"I was so sure of my girl acting her part all right, that I tipped the word to Belding to tell Murchison that he had followed his advice, except that he had not thought it necessary to have more than the man from the Central Office. I told Belding that the girl was not known as a detective—which was true enough—and that I didn't wish even Murchison to suspect that she was one. I went so far as to conceal her real name from the Beldings, and spoke of her as a 'Miss Watson.'

"I almost never make use of a woman as an assistant, though I know that some of them are very sharp and efficient; but I deemed myself fortunate in being able to get Miss Marcy to help me. When my oldest girl went to school-teaching in Pennsylvania, it left us with a spare room in our flat, and my wife, being a thrifty-minded woman, determined to take a lodger. She preferred to have a trained nurse, because, as she said, they are apt to be away a good deal of the time.

"Miss Marcy had been with us for

some weeks. We probably should have seen very little of her if my boy Sammy hadn't come down with a bad cold on his lungs that threatened to turn into pneumonia. Miss Marcy took care of him all through his illness, and would only accept her board and lodging as pay for her trouble. We naturally got to think a great deal of her, and to feel as if she was an old friend. The doctor said she was one of the best nurses he had ever met; and we felt under all sorts of obligation to her.

"She fell into the habit of spending the evenings with my wife; and whenever I was at home she used to get me to tell her stories about my experiences. She showed so much cleverness in her comments that I told her that, splendid nurse as she was, I believed she had missed her true calling, and if she had been a man she would have been an honor to the force. She laughed, and said she would like to try her hand at it some time; but I told her it was no sort of work for a lady; and that's what she was clear through, and no mistake; and a mighty good-looking one at that. She was tall, slender, fair-haired, and very aristocratic looking.

"However, when I got this call from the Beldings, it seemed to me that she would be just the person to help me, and I was glad to put her in the way of earning some easy money, in view of all she had done for us.

"She seemed a little scared at first when I proposed that she should go there with me; but she soon yielded to my persuasions, and I could see that she was really attracted by the opportunity. Her station, as I said, was in the ladies' dressing-room; while I stayed down-stairs, mostly hanging about the hall, where I could pipe off all the guests as they came down-stairs, and keep my eye on Mrs. Belding and her jewels, as she stood to greet her friends just inside the drawing-room.

"Murchison came rather late, and, after making his bow to his hostess and merely touching her hand, circulated among the guests, few of whom, however, he appeared to know. He seemed

to avoid being anywhere in Mrs. Belding's neighborhood.

"Supper was served about half-past twelve; and I took a place in the corner of the dining-room, not too near Mrs. Belding, but where I could keep that animated lighthouse well under observation. At a little after one o'clock I saw Barbara—that is, Miss Marcy—come in and whisper in Mrs. Belding's ear, at the same time giving a rapid glance around the room. I rose, and began quietly to edge my way toward them; and, as I did so, I saw Mrs. Belding excuse herself to the people with whom she was sitting and rise from the table. At that moment Barbara caught my eye, and signaled to me to follow. As the two women stepped out of the dining-room, I went out through another door, to avoid attracting attention, and met them in the hall.

"'I was telling Mrs. Belding,' Barbara began, as I joined them, 'that Master Franky was not feeling very well, and I thought she had better go to him, and I thought you had better come, too.' So saying, she led the way up-stairs.

"Mrs. Belding, of course, was full of anxiety about her son, a bright little chap of about five, and plied Barbara with questions as we hurried to the next floor; and it seemed to me that the girl answered her evasively.

"As soon as we arrived at the nursery door, Barbara laid her hand on Mrs. Belding's arm to detain her as she was for entering the room, and said in a voice that, though calm and measured, evidently masked a feeling of considerable excitement:

"'I brought you both up here under false pretenses, I am afraid. In fact, I don't know how Master Franky is. He is not in his room. Nurse and I have looked in all the other rooms, and we can't find him. He—he's disappeared! Be calm,' she cautioned the frightened mother, who broke from her and burst into the nursery.

"We followed her, and Barbara shut the door. I looked at the little fellow's bed. It was empty, all right. I slipped my hand under the bedclothes. There was a faint suggestion of warmth. He

could not have been out of them for more than a few minutes.

"'We missed him about five minutes ago,' Barbara answered to our eager inquiries. 'Nurse and I had been eating some ice-cream in the ladies' dressing-room, and we got talking about the little boy, and she stepped in here to see if he was all right—and he was gone. We looked all around this floor without finding him, and then I sent nurse to look up-stairs while I came down for you.'

"At that instant the nurse entered, pale and trembling, and announced that she had been through all the rooms on the two floors above, including the servants' quarters, and that the boy was not to be found.

"Mrs. Belding gasped, and seemed about to faint. Barbara handed her a glass of water from the table by the boy's empty crib. She drank it, and it seemed to revive her.

"'Somebody's stolen him!' she cried. 'Oh, why didn't they take my jewels? My boy! my boy! I was only thinking of my diamonds, and now I've lost my child, my Franky!'

"I left the soothing of the two distracted women to Barbara, and thought rapidly.

"'The scuttle!' Barbara suddenly suggested. I made a movement toward the door. 'Don't you go,' she cried. 'There's something behind all this. I don't believe it's the boy they're after. It's the jewels! Let nurse see if the scuttle's fastened; you stay here with Mrs. Belding. She's going to faint, I'm afraid. I'll run down and get Mr. Belding. Then you can telephone to the police.'

"I looked at the girl in amazement. She had read my own intentions like a book. My first movement toward the door had been but a momentary impulse, instantly reconsidered for the plan that Barbara had put into words.

"The nurse hurried up to the roof, and Barbara turned toward the back stairs. By this time I had an insensible woman on my hands. Mrs. Belding had gone off into a dead faint. I laid her down upon a couch and was doing

my best to revive her, when a piercing shriek rang through the house, followed by a cry of 'Murder!' in a woman's voice. Then came a pistol-shot, a sound of crashing glass, and then another shot!

"The voice was Barbara's, and it came from the back stairs. I went on the jump in its direction. I found the window on the landing shattered, and the girl—very much disheveled, her left sleeve ripped from shoulder to elbow, her arm bleeding, a smoking revolver in her right hand—looking out into the rear yard of a row of flat houses that faced on the side street.

"'There! there!' she cried, as she pointed with her pistol. 'He leaped to the wall and vaulted the railing! He's hiding in there, somewhere!' Then, 'Look out for the boy!' as I bounded to her side.

"At her left lay a little huddled form in flannel nightclothes. Stooping down, she gathered the child to her breast with her wounded arm as I gazed out into the dim shadows of the faintly illuminated yard. I could see no one. By this time servants and guests were crowding around us with excited queries; and through them came old Belding, puffing and pushing.

"'What's happened? What's the matter? Who's shot?' he shouted.

"'A man was trying to kidnap Franky,' Barbara explained. 'I seized him; he tried to stab me; I shot at him; he jumped through the window; I shot again; but he got away!'

"'Which way did he go?' asked an athletic-looking young fellow, one of the guests, darting past Belding and Barbara toward the window, and measuring the eight-foot jump with his eye.

"'Let no one leave this house without Mr. Belding's permission!' I ordered. 'Did you see the man clearly? Could you describe him?' I asked Barbara.

"'Yes, yes,' she said.

"'Then stay where you are,' I said to the eager athlete. 'The police will look after him. We'll have all we can attend to indoors. He may have an accomplice here, among us, now.'

"'The scoundrels!' cried old Belding. 'Let's search the house. Where's my wife?'

"Barbara turned a withering glance on me. 'You left her?' she said. 'Fool, fool! This was just the chance they wanted. I've got the boy, all right. Here, take him.' She thrust the little chap into his father's arms. 'Carry him to his mother. Go to her quickly,' she urged me. 'Don't leave her alone another second. I'll telephone for help.'

"She wrapped her apron around her bleeding arm and drove the curious, agitated crowd before her down-stairs, while I dragged the almost apoplectic Belding in the opposite direction.

"'Come; your wife has fainted,' I explained to him. 'You must stay with her while I settle this affair.'

"We hurried to the nursery, and went in. Mrs. Belding was lying just where I had left her.

"There was not a jewel on her.

"Earrings, bracelets, necklace, sunburst, pendants, hair-ornaments, stomacher, brooches, stick pins, buckles, even her finger rings—she had been stripped clean of them all. Only her plain gold wedding-ring and her solitaire engagement-ring remained of all the glittering display with which she had been loaded.

"'Stung!' I cried, making a dash for the lower floor to lock the front door.

"There, standing with his back to it, was Murchison, pale as a ghost, haranguing a number of the guests who gathered around him."

CHAPTER IV.

"'A tragedy has just been averted in this house,' Murchison was saying. 'It is our duty to our hosts to remain here quietly until the police have made an investigation. I urge you all to remain.'

"'And I order you to!' I interrupted, throwing back my coat and showing my shield. 'The Belding jewels have been stolen! They were taken from Mrs. Belding while she lay in a faint upstairs, not five minutes ago. If there is

a physician here, let him go to her at once."

"Two gentlemen, an elderly man, whom I recognized as Doctor Bassett, and a younger one, made for the stairs. Just then one of the maids came running to me, and whispered in my ear.

"Do you go to Mrs. Belding," I said to Doctor Bassett, and to the other: "Please go with this girl and look after Miss Watson"—giving the name by which I had introduced Barbara to the Beldings. "She has collapsed."

"By this time Murchison had mounted a low ottoman, and was speaking earnestly to the people who had crowded into the big hall. He was saying that this was the fourth crime of the kind that had been committed that winter, and that he had, unfortunately, been present at every one of them—that, so far as he knew, he was the only person who had been present at all of them; that the police had been unable to discover the thief, and that it placed him in a very embarrassing, perhaps dangerous, position. He hoped that out of consideration for Mr. and Mrs. Belding, for himself, and in the cause of justice, all present would allow themselves to be searched; that he would set the example. He begged me to have a detective accompany him to his home, and to keep him under surveillance for as long as might be necessary.

"He was certainly a wonder. He was suggesting, of course, the very procedure I had in mind; but his doing so completely took the wind out of my sails, and gained the sympathy of everybody present. It also made it easier for me; for, if I had proposed searching the guests, there would have been no end of indignation and complaint.

"It was not long before we had plain-clothes men from two precincts, and a matron from the nearest station that had one, besides an officer who had come in at the sound of the shots. After a time, and with but little objection, the people were carefully gone over and allowed to depart. Murchison was the first to go, as he had asked, and his request for the company of an of-

ficer was likewise granted. He got permission for the man to spend a week with him, sleeping in his rooms and going about with him. It was a farce, of course; for it was certain that Murchison would do nothing to compromise himself so long as he knew he was being watched; so I had the chief call the man off, and took the job in hand myself, but keeping very much out of sight. For, by that time, I had exhausted every other possibility; and to my mind the guilty man was Murchison, and nobody else.

"As soon as Murchison had left the house, I took one of the plain-clothes men and went to see Barbara. She had revived quickly, but was still faint and weak, suffering both from the shock and the pain in her arm. She described the kidnap as of medium build, with a smooth face. He wore a derby hat, black trousers, white tie, and a tan-colored overcoat, apparently worn over a dress suit. He had held the child in his arms, and was coming up the back stairs as she went down.

"She was on him almost before he noticed her, she said; and when she snatched at the child, and demanded what he was doing with the little fellow, the man tried to push by her, but said nothing. She resisted; and when he persisted, she said that, on the impulse, she drew the pistol, which, unknown to me, she had carried in her pocket.

"She told me afterward that she had a sort of premonition that something was going to happen, and so had taken a revolver to be ready for any emergency. As soon as the boy was missed she had taken it from her pocket, and slipped it behind the bib of her apron.

"Before she could take aim, however, the man had let the boy slide to the stairs, and had drawn a knife. She saw the knife so quickly, that her impression was that he had it ready drawn in his hand. He drove at her with it—and then was when she screamed. Throwing up her left arm to protect herself, she tripped backward upstairs; and, as she did so, the combined movements evidently disturbed the

man's aim so that the blade only ripped her sleeve and inflicted a long but not deep scratch on her arm, her revolver going off at the same time.

"The man instantly turned from her, and, shattering the window with his shoulder, jumped through it, as she had already described. It was a second or two before she pulled herself together; and then she rose and fired at him point-blank, but apparently without effect. Almost immediately she lost sight of him, as if he had slipped into the back door of one of the flat houses, which had a long, open back yard, or court, in common.

"It would have been easy for him to have done so, to have gained the first floor, and so to have passed out of the front door, whence he could have sauntered quietly away unobserved. The flats were without hall-boys; and the janitor lived in the front basement of the fifth house. He was supposed to lock the yard doors at night; but my men found that two of the five opened on the latch. The location had been well chosen.

"In the darkness and confusion Barbara was unable to observe the kidnapier as closely as I had hoped. Her first impression had been that he was one of the guests, perhaps Murchison; though she afterward had time to note that he was shorter and stockier.

"We gained little by that clue; for, though the Central Office men rounded up a half-dozen crooks and suspects in the next week, Barbara was certain that none of them was the man we were looking for.

"That didn't bother me so much, however, since the baffled kidnapier was evidently not the jewel-thief, but only an accomplice of his; and I was certain in my own mind that there had been no intention to steal the child, but only to effect a diversion so as to enable his principal to turn the trick. My theory was that the man Barbara saw had waited on the stairs with the child for some one to come along, counting on its being one of the women, intending to make a demonstration with his knife, and then to jump through the window,

believing that the crash and the cries of the girl would bring me to the spot.

"What made this seem more probable was the circumstance that the glass had previously been cut almost through with a glazier's diamond, close to the sash, so that a slight push would send it out into the yard. The fact that Barbara was armed evidently made him really try to defend himself, while the sounds of her pistol-shots intensified the climax that he had prepared.

"There was a coat-closet for the servants at the foot of the back stairs, and, beyond it, a door opening into the butler's pantry. A man could easily conceal himself in the closet—as I found by going into it—and, by keeping the door into the pantry open on the crack, he could see through the pantry into the dining-room, and observe when Mrs. Belding left it, as the pantry door had been kept open during the time that supper was being served.

"The boy had evidently been drugged, for he slept soundly throughout the entire performance; and when he awakened in the morning he had no recollection of anything out of the way having happened to him. Another thing that made me feel that the taking of the child was meant to be discovered was that the kidnapier had left the door of the nursery open; and it was the fact of Barbara's noticing it and calling the nurse's attention to it, and asking if she wasn't afraid that the noise would awaken the boy, that sent the girl into the room to see if he were asleep. If the door had been shut, the fact that the child was missing might not have been noticed for some time.

"The whole affair had been carefully planned. What seemed to cast a doubt upon it being one of Murchison's jobs was this: All the other thefts of which I had suspected him had apparently been done without confederates. What made me doubt my doubt were the thoroughness and mysteriousness with which this fourth robbery had been carried through. That pointed almost indubitably to the same master hand that had been operating earlier in the winter.

"One of my first inquiries was to find out where Murchison had been during the excitement. It appeared, from what he told me frankly enough—and what he said was amply corroborated—that he had sat at supper at one of two tables that had been moved into the drawing-room to relieve the crowding in the banquet-room. Both these tables had been occupied by men, of whom there was a surplus at the entertainment. They had finished supper at about one o'clock, and several of them had gone up-stairs to the men's dressing-room for a smoke.

"When the shots and shriek and breaking glass had been heard they had all darted into the hall, Murchison with them. The others rushed toward the back stairs; but Murchison had held back, saying that he did not propose to become mixed up in any more trouble; that there had evidently been some tragedy, and that he was going down to guard the front door. And there, sure enough, was where I found him when I hurried down after discovering the loss of the jewels.

"He said that he had stood there several minutes, four or five, he should judge, before anybody came into the hall, as at first every one had naturally moved toward the back of the house, where the trouble had occurred. Murchison freely acknowledged that in his effort to get out of the way of suspicion he had probably stepped directly into the lime-light.

"'For I don't need to tell you,' he said to me, 'that there was probably ample time for an expert thief to have taken the jewels while I was standing guard over the door; perhaps time for me to have taken them if I had known that Mrs. Belding was alone in the nursery. You'd better watch me pretty sharp in the future,' he added; 'because if I'm going to acquire the reputation among you sleuths of being a thief, I may decide to acquire some of the profit as well.'

"It was just as he said. He might have done the trick—and I believed that he had. The difficulty was to prove it. If he took the jewels, what had he done

with them? They couldn't be found. He didn't have them, and he couldn't have passed them out of the door, because the carriage man said that no one had approached or opened the front door between the time that the first shot was fired and the arrival of the plain-clothes men.

"A patrolman, who had been standing talking with him, had heard the shot, too, and had run around the corner from where the sound appeared to come. He had come running back immediately, and had gone into the house through the basement door.

"Murchison could not have thrown the jewels out of any of the front windows, because the carriage man had been on the sidewalk just outside the awning, and he would have been sure to see him. Moreover, there had been nobody around to take them. However, I had this man shadowed for a long time, but without result.

"Naturally, all the servants were searched, not excepting Barbara, who was regarded as the heroine of the evening. It seemed as if nobody could do enough for her. Mr. Belding wanted 'Miss Watson' to spend the night, and offered her one of the guest-rooms; but she voted to go home to keep my wife company, since I would have to be up all night on the job.

"So Belding himself called a cab for her; and I rushed up-stairs and brought down her suit-case, which contained the street dress she had worn to the house. Mrs. Belding, who had been revived at last, but who was still shaky and unnerved, was thoughtful enough to send down a loose, warm automobile wrap, so that Barbara would not have to put her wounded arm into the sleeve of her coat; and she departed in a blaze of glory, for which, to do her justice, she appeared to have little taste.

"Indeed, she shrank, so far as it was possible, from all publicity in the matter; refused to talk to reporters, referring them all to me, and remained close at home until her arm was entirely healed, amusing herself with reading, crocheting, and suchlike feminine employments.

"In the meantime I exhausted all the power of the detective bureau to trace the jewels. It was a curious fact that, so far as our most searching inquiries could reveal, not one of all the gems that had been so similarly stolen that winter had been pawned or offered for sale. The four affairs made no end of stir, and every important handler of jewels was aware of the robberies, and was undoubtedly on the outlook for the gems.

"My first care had been to search the house, since it did not seem possible that the plunder could have been taken away from it; but though no one came in or went out for three days without being under constant espionage while we were looking into every possible and impossible place—it was all useless effort. The Belding jewels had completely vanished."

CHAPTER V.

"I had gained no credit for the affair from my superiors, as you can well imagine," continued Rogers; "and in my despair I begged to be given a free hand and to be allowed to devote my entire time for six months to unraveling the mystery, staking what was left of my reputation on the venture. I agreed, if I should not succeed in that time, either to resign or to accept reduction to the rank of patrolman. I even offered to pay all the expenses I incurred, provided the money would be refunded if I were successful. And it was so ordered.

"I now began to observe Murchison with the utmost vigilance. It was plain to see that he was greatly disturbed in mind, although there was nothing in his actions to arouse suspicion. He did not go about so much as he did before, even to his club; but neither did he go to places that he was not in the habit of going to, but spent more time at home. It was reported to me that he often spoke to his more intimate friends of the uncomfortable position in which he had been placed. He seemed to fear that people would regard him as a thief,

and that some of his acquaintances avoided him. He railed at the inertness of the police, whose incapacity, he declared, permitted him to remain under a cloud. He even went to see the chief, and offered a reward of two thousand dollars for the discovery of the thief and the return of the jewels.

"Naturally, this was reported in the newspapers; and I think that, after that, what little feeling there may really have been against him among those who knew him was quite dissipated. His every move appeared to have been dictated by the utmost tact so far as the public was concerned; for you must always keep in mind that he was about the last man that anybody would be likely to associate with anything in the nature of dishonesty, in the first place.

"All this had no effect upon me, however, except to make me more alert than ever. By every point of logic, save that of motive, he, and no other, must have been the moving spirit in all four robberies. I felt sure that if I could only discover a motive, I should be far on my way to trap my bird. There were three possible reasons that might have impelled him to engage in such dangerous enterprises.

"The first was need of money. But, so far as I could learn, neither he nor any one else had even made an effort to realize on his booty.

"The second was an overpowering attraction for precious stones, such as some people have been known to have. But, as a matter of fact, he appeared to have an indifference to them. He wore no jewelry himself, excepting a watch and the few necessary studs and cuff-buttons that every gentleman must wear; and those were severely plain. He had only one ring, a gold one, with his coat of arms engraved on it. Moreover, if this was his motive, he would be likely to seek to gratify his longing by an occasional look at his treasures; and I was certain that they were not in his apartments, nor in any other place where it would be possible for him to inspect them even occasionally.

"The third and last imaginable reason was a love of adventure for its own

sake; a desire to emulate the falsely romantic heroes of a certain class of pernicious fiction that had recently come into vogue—an insane desire to be a 'gentleman burglar.' Such a supposition might account for his not attempting to raise money on the proceeds of his robberies. Here again there was nothing in his conduct or character that justified such a conclusion. Besides, I doubt if any such persons ever existed outside the covers of a sensational novel.

"Kleptomania is one thing—a seemingly irresistible impulse to possess oneself of objects that can be easily taken and concealed, often without regard to any possible value they may have to the thief—but ingeniously planned robberies, involving deliberate forethought, skilful execution, and a careful covering of all tracks are quite another. Besides, all these thefts that I believed to be Murchison's had as their aim objects of unusual value.

"A month or more had passed by without result, when I learned from the man who had made friends with Murchison's valet that my bird was going to fly at last. He had told his servant that he was going to give up his rooms and spend a year or two in Europe, gave the fellow a week's notice and two months' wages, and proceeded to dismantle his apartment and pack his things.

"I ascertained that in his usual open way he had engaged passage on the *Kravonia*, placed his yacht in the hands of an agent, and sold his horses. He made no secret of his departure, telling his friends that he thought he had stayed in New York long enough to show his unconcern in regard to any suspicions that might have been cherished against him; but saying that he was sick of the town and its associations, and proposed to see if change of scene would not cheer him up a bit, and cause him to forget the annoyance he had suffered.

"I at once determined to sail by the same steamer. If Murchison had the jewels, he would naturally take them with him. The total value of them all

would run up into almost a million dollars; and it was hardly likely that he would entrust them to an express company, or even to a confederate. It would, of course, be far easier for him to sell the stones in Europe than in America, if that was his object; but at the same time it would be harder for him to secrete them if he traveled about with them. The foreign police, especially in Continental countries, are much more alert in following the movements of strangers than ours are, and custom-house officers more inquisitive, if perhaps less troublesome.

"I secured a berth in the second cabin, paying the lowest first-class fare, which gave me the freedom of the ship, and at the same time made it easier for me to keep out of Murchison's sight. I told the purser who I was, and said that I was shadowing a passenger, but without specifying which one.

"I went home that evening wondering how I should break the news to my wife. She knew that I was spending my own money on the case, and I felt that I should meet with opposition from her. Barbara unexpectedly afforded me the desired opportunity. She came into the sitting-room with a rather large, oblong pasteboard box in her hands, into which she began to pack some square cakes of maple-sugar and an afghan, upon which she had been working for some time.

"Whatever are you going to do with those?" I asked.

"Send them to my sister for a birthday present," said she, with a laugh. "She's simply crazy about maple-sugar, and she hasn't had any in two years. The afghan is for her to give to the invalid lady she's with. You know my older sister is a trained nurse, too. By the way," she continued, "you're a man, and so are supposed to know about such things; where do you go to send things by express to London? Will any of the big companies take packages for abroad, or is there some special company?"

"Is your sister in London?" I asked. "And are you intending to send her that box by express?" Barbara nodded af-

firmatively. ‘Why, my dear girl,’ I explained, ‘the expressage on that box will come to more than the value of what’s in it.’

“Will it, really?” she asked, in a disappointed tone. “Well, I don’t care if it does. I’ve got these things for her, and she’s going to have them, no matter what it costs. How much do you think it will be? Here, have a bite of maple-sugar,” she said, as she broke one of the cakes and offered the pieces to my wife and me in the box cover.

“Oh,” I laughed, as I munched on the sweet stuff, “I guess I can fix it so it won’t cost you a cent.”

“Why, how is that?” she cried. “Have you a ‘pull’ with somebody?”

“Better than that,” I said; “I’ll take the box to your sister. Give it to me, and I’ll put it in my trunk. I’m going to London myself on Saturday.”

“My wife looked up with an expression of surprise and reproof in her eyes; but I knew I was safe from her criticism for the moment; for, however fond I may be of talking about my past experiences, it was always a rule in our family not to allude to any case I might be engaged on at the time when others were present. My wife guessed that I was going abroad on the Murchison business, but she only asked me how long I expected to be gone. That, I told her, would depend upon circumstances beyond my control. Barbara said she didn’t want to bother me with the package; but I explained that I would have to take a trunk, anyhow, and there would be lots of room; so she borrowed a piece of wrapping-paper and some twine, and tied up her bundle.

“Now, I’m not going to make you deliver this,” she said. “I shall just write to my sister to call for it, and you can leave it in the office of the hotel. By the way, where will you stay?”

“I told her where I should go on my arrival, but indicated that I might not remain there long.

“Oh, well,” said Barbara, “my letter will go by the same steamer that you take, so she’ll probably call a day or two after you arrive. It’s awfully good of you. Do you think I can trust you?”

you seem pretty fond of my maple-sugar. Have some more.” And she passed it around again. Then she went to the desk and wrote a note to her sister, which she asked me to put in the post when I went out.

“I glanced at the address: ‘Miss Marcy, 93 Surbiton Gardens.’

“They live in one of those ‘paying-guests’ places,” Barbara said. “She finds it pretty dull at times; but it’s steady work and good pay.”

“I made my peace with my wife as best I could, when we were alone; and it was a comfort for me to feel that Barbara would be with her while I was away; she was so bright and companionable, and ready to turn her hand to anything. It was like having a daughter and a doctor in the house.

“There was nobody to see me off when the *Kravonia* sailed; but a number of Murchison’s friends came down to the steamer to bid him farewell, some women among them; and he appeared to be quite touched at this evidence of their confidence and regard. I could see a tear glint in the corner of his eye as he turned from the rail when the vessel swung into the stream.

“The only disguise I had adopted was a quite obvious wig, a pair of spectacles, and the general appearance and accent of a German professor. I have never been able to buy any of those marvelous false whiskers by means of which detectives disguise themselves so wonderfully in books and on the stage; though I’ve seen a man in a play slip on a crape-hair beard, muss up his hair, and successfully conceal his identity from everybody but the audience. So far as Murchison was concerned, I relied on keeping out of his sight as much as possible, and I only undertook so to alter my general bearing and appearance that, if his eye did chance to light on me, he would see nothing familiar enough, sufficiently unusual, to draw his attention to me.

“By the third day out I had become well enough acquainted with Murchison’s ship habits to be able to set a time for inspecting his stateroom. He had joined a ‘bridge’ crowd in the smoking-

room, and played cards there every evening from about half-past nine until after midnight. He had taken an entire room for himself, which made me think that he probably had reasons for not desiring company, especially as all of his heavy luggage, which consisted of only two steamer-trunks, had been brought there, where they would be under his own eye.

"I had no trouble in getting into his room. I had walked by it a dozen times when he was on deck, and had tried a number of pass-keys, until I had found one that fitted. An electric pocket reading-lamp gave me all the light I needed. I took over an hour to the work, and examined every cubic inch of the little cabin; but the jewels were not there! I even looked under the slats of the berths, and poked into the drain-pipe of his wash-basin. I then came to the conclusion that he must have taken the gems from their settings and have disposed of them about his person—perhaps in a money-belt. An extra large one, no doubt, would carry them all.

"How was I to discover if it were so? A way opened most unexpectedly. I had stepped out into the passage and was locking the stateroom door, when I felt something cold against my face, and heard a low, deep voice say:

"'Unlock that door again and go in.'"

CHAPTER VI.

"I did so promptly, I confess," said Rogers.

"Murchison followed, revolver in hand, and bade me:

"'Sit down!'

"I sat.

"Now, Rogers," he went on, in a tone of exasperated complaint, "you make me tired. I suppose you've gone and rummaged over all my clothes, and stuck your nose into all my private papers," and only had your trouble for your pains. I thought I left you and all your confounded nonsense behind me; but you're worse than a burr. I tell you," he went on, "this thing has got

to stop now. Your intrusion was entirely without warrant, and I could report you to the captain, and have you put under arrest. Instead, I'm going to make you stay here until I've gone to bed. Will you stay quietly, or shall I have to tie you?"

"I told him I would stay for as long as he desired my company.

"'I don't desire it at all,' he replied. 'The boot's on the other leg entirely; but I'm going to give you enough of my society to satisfy you; and then I hope I'll see no more of you.'

"With that he began to undress; and, as he took off each garment, he tossed it to me, saying, 'Look at that!' At last he had stripped to the buff, and had put on his pajamas, without a sign of a belt or of anything that could possibly have contained even a single diamond.

"'Now are you satisfied?' he asked, as he pulled back the bedclothes.

"I allowed that I was.

"'Then, for Heaven's sake, get out of here; take off that silly wig, and keep away from me. I want to go to sleep.' He got into bed. 'Turn out the light,' he added, 'and lock the door on the outside with your own key, and then throw it overboard.'

"I followed his instructions to the letter. I was mad enough to want to throw myself after the key. Not because I didn't believe that Murchison was guilty, but because I recognized in him the most skilful and audacious criminal I had ever encountered. I was only the more determined to run him to earth at last.

"The next morning we met on the main deck after breakfast. Murchison seemed in better temper than the night before, and greeted me pleasantly.

"'Rogers,' he said, turning and walking by my side, 'I'm afraid I was rather rude last evening; but you must admit that I had provocation.'

"I did admit it.

"'Of course,' he continued, 'I give you credit for good intentions. You're doubtless only following out the instructions of your superiors. But don't you really think it's about time to drop this false trail, and to get after the real

criminal? If you want to earn that two-thousand-dollar reward you'd better. Don't think I'm not as anxious as you are to bring the thief to justice. I am, and a thousand times more so. The chief has my money; and if you think you can earn it chasing me around, of course I can't stop you; but I hate to see talents like yours wasted in this futile manner.' He smiled pleasantly, and I resolved to meet him in the same spirit.

"I believe you're right," I said. "I have to obey orders; but I'm allowed some discretion. I think I shall spend a week in London, and then take the next Saturday's steamer home."

"Good work!" he shouted. "And I'll give you the time of your life in that week. You'd have made a big success if you had gone into some other line of business, Rogers; and if you ever feel like making a change, I'll give you a lift, if you'll let me."

"In two days more we arrived in Liverpool, and, as I had previously arranged by cable, two men from a private agency in London were at the dock to meet me, and pretending to be hotel runners. One of them had been instructed to find Murchison and to keep an eye on him; the other was to report at once to me. I told them both to keep Murchison under strict observation day and night, and to engage another man to help them, if necessary. I then explained that I had made friends with Murchison, and should probably see more or less of him for a week; but that they were not to relax their vigilance on that account. It would, in fact, enable me to keep close tab on their work.

"I saw Murchison every day, and he kept me busy with excursions, sightseeing, theaters, music-halls, and what not. On Friday we dined at the Savoy, with champagne in buckets, and then I started for the train to Liverpool. Murchison drove me to the station in a cab. He was certainly a most companionable and entertaining man. Now that he had assumed that we had dropped the respective rôles of pursuer and pursued, he appeared to take an

enormous fancy to me; and I must own I fairly reciprocated. It was hard to believe that he was the adroit criminal that my logical processes compelled me to adjudge him.

"We stopped at my hotel for my hand luggage, and then it occurred to me to inquire at the office if the package for Barbara's sister had been called for. The clerk informed me that a lady in a nurse's uniform had taken it away two days before. Murchison had dined well, and seemed so loath to bid me farewell that he boarded the train with me, and said he would ride to Liverpool and see me off. In fact, he did not leave me until the vessel sailed; and he was standing on the dock waving his handkerchief to me as the ship passed out into the Mersey.

"I had no intention of going to America, however, but left the *Kravonia* at Queenstown, and hurried back to London, and settled in lodgings that I had secured in a retired neighborhood, and awaited reports from my two spotters. I had noticed one of them, Mavering by name, at the door of the Savoy; and, out of the corner of my eye, had seen him enter a cab as we drove away. I thought I had observed him at the railway-station, but I had failed to run across him in Liverpool. The truth came out when he called at my lodgings the evening of my return. He confessed that he had not noticed Murchison get into the railway-carriage with me, and had waited some time after the train left for him to reenter the waiting-room.

"It was two days later before Murchison showed up again, and then he left immediately for Paris. I dismissed Mavering on account of his carelessness, but retained the other man, a Swiss named Schmidt, whom I suspected of having been a waiter, and who could chatter fluently in almost every European language. Schmidt kept close after Murchison, and I followed later in the day, picking up a good man in Paris to alternate with the Swiss.

"For more than two months Murchison kept me and my men moving from place to place, but without affording us

the least clue to anything out of the way. He visited no jeweler's or pawn-shops, and saw no people whom we were able to place as handlers of gems. He had an ample letter of credit at his banker's, and his interests and activities were not different from those of any other clean-minded, wholesome, sportsmanlike gentleman.

"Valadon, the chap I took on in Paris, had been clever enough to get Murchison to engage him as valet and courier; but even the intimate association, thus brought about, was ineffectual to bring to light anything of a suspicious nature, except that Murchison always got his mail personally at his banker's, and wrote all his letters there. It was, accordingly, impossible to learn with whom he corresponded.

"The time limit of six months which I had set for apprehending Murchison was now more than two-thirds gone, and I was no nearer to catching him than I had been in the beginning; and I must confess that the strain was beginning to wear on my nerves—when they received a further shock from a totally unexpected quarter."

CHAPTER VII.

"By this time we were back in London, and Murchison was preparing to go to Scotland, so Valadon informed me, for a couple of weeks' shooting at Duncadene Castle.

"The day after my return from the Continent, a messenger from Scotland Yard brought me a fat registered letter postmarked Amsterdam, Holland, and addressed to me in Barbara Marcy's handwriting. To say that I was surprised would but faintly express my feelings. I knew that Barbara had left New York shortly after I had sailed; but my wife had written me that the girl had received an unexpected offer to travel with a semi-invalid lady, and that the terms had proved too advantageous to be refused. I understood, however, that they had gone out West, and what the girl was doing in Holland I could not imagine.

"I was scarcely any more enlightened when I opened the envelope and looked at the contents. There were a lot of post-office money-orders from various cities in Europe, and a package of bank-notes, the whole amounting to more than ten thousand francs. Accompanying them was the following letter. I can give it to you word for word:

"DEAR MR. ROGERS: Why have you not answered my letter? I hope I am carrying out your ideas correctly. This is the best I have been able to do. I am afraid I am watched. Will try to see you in London at 93. Be careful. Two can play at your game. Are you sure of 'V'? P. O. orders secured in name of Mademoiselle F. B. G. M. Van Kloep. Cash them at once. Am leaving here to-night. Anxious to see you. But be very careful. As ever, B. M.

"There was a postscript which said:

"Have the money in gold by the time you see me. I may need some. Cable your London address to Van Kloep, Dieppe."

Fenway here arose quietly, and, going to one of the bookcases that lined the walls of the study, selected a volume, the leaves of which he proceeded to turn after he resumed his seat, without interrupting the flow of Rogers' narrative.

"This was a puzzler for fair," continued the ex-detective. "What on earth, I wondered, was the girl up to, and what did she mean? What had she been doing in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Brussels, Marseilles, Buda-Pesth, Cracow, Warsaw, and Dresden? I had received no letter from her, neither had I written to her. Here was a new and disturbing mystery. Why did she think I needed money? Why the secrecy and warnings? Why should she be watched, and why think I was? 'V.' evidently stood for Valadon; but how could she know about him, and why suspect him?

"I was convinced that whatever might come out of the cryptic message would reveal that the fine Italian hand of Murchison had been at work in some way, but to what end? In the meantime there was the five thousand or so francs in cash—a large sum to entrust to the mails, even in a registered

package—and all those money-orders, some of them nearly a month old.

"I hope I am carrying out your ideas correctly," she had written. What ideas? Whence had she derived them? From Murchison I firmly believed. Yet apparently she had been acting upon some suggestion or initiative that she believed had come from me. Had Murchison been adding forgery to his other crimes? Then it should be easy to catch him if Barbara had preserved the communications that she had received. Could it be that Murchison had so misled her that she had been conducting herself in a manner to divert suspicion from himself to her? It seemed possible, but evidently there had been some slip-up—a link lost in the chain—and now the evidence of his rascality was coming into my hands.

"I felt more cheerful than at any time since I had taken up the chase. It had seemed impossible up to that moment to catch the man in any break or overt act. It was needless to try to conjecture what his scheme might be, for I should soon hear Barbara's story from her own lips, and learn the meaning of her curious warnings. I congratulated myself on the patience and persistence that I had shown in keeping on Murchison's trail, despite the lack of encouragement I had received, and was convinced that I was about to get my hands upon him at last.

"As to what to do with the post-office money-orders I was in a quandary. Were they part of the plot? I decided, finally, to follow out Barbara's instructions substantially, if not to the letter. That is, I cashed all but a few of the smaller and later ones, retaining a half-dozen, covering as wide a range of territory as possible. I changed the proceeds into gold, added thereto gold to the value of the bank-notes, and deposited the whole amount in a sealed package at my banker's.

"Then I went to 93 Surbiton Gardens, and asked if Mademoiselle Van Kloep lived there. She did not, and never had. Did Miss Marcy live there? She did not, but she had stayed there last spring. I asked to see the land-

lady, and inquired of her if Miss Marcy's sister were expected soon. She told me that she did not know that Miss Marcy had a sister, but that Miss Marcy herself had telegraphed to engage a room, and would arrive the following day. I thanked her and returned to my lodgings. Possibly the elder Miss Marcy would be able to enlighten me somewhat in regard to Barbara's doings, and I made up my mind to lose no time in calling upon her.

"The next morning Schmidt reported to me that when Murchison had come in the night before he had sent Valadon out for some tobacco. When Valadon returned, he found only a note from Murchison saying that he had been obliged to go out again suddenly, and would probably not return until late the next day. This had occurred after Schmidt had laid off work for the night. It looked rather as if Murchison knew not only he was being watched, but by whom and at what hours.

"I thought of Barbara's warning to look out for 'V,' and I sent for Valadon and questioned him closely; but his story seemed straightforward enough, so I ordered him back to wait for Murchison. My own later inquiries of the night elevator man at Murchison's hotel, and of the tobacconist on the corner, confirmed the man's report.

"By this time it was afternoon, and I was about to make another call at 93 Surbiton Gardens, when my telephone-bell rang.

"It was Murchison!

"He said that he had learned that I was in London again, and would I call at once at his hotel. He was very anxious to see me, and had something surprising to communicate. I thought I could foresee what was coming, and was only sorry that I had not had a chance to talk first to Barbara or her sister. However, I said I would meet him in half an hour, and immediately called up 93 Surbiton Gardens.

"I learned, in answer to my inquiries, that the Miss Marcy who had stayed there in the spring had arrived that morning, but that her sister was not with her. She had gone out, leaving

word that she would not be back to dinner.

"When I arrived at Murchison's hotel, Schmidt approached me, and said that Murchison had driven that morning to 93 Surbiton Gardens, and had returned a short time ago with a lady, who was at present in his rooms. In reply to my queries as to her appearance, he said that she had auburn hair and a rather full figure. This agreed with Barbara's description of her older sister. Wondering what devilment was now on foot, I went at once to Murchison's rooms.

"He was alone."

CHAPTER VIII.

"Murchison's greeting lacked a good deal of the fervor of his parting from me at Liverpool," said Rogers, continuing his story; "and he looked at me in a serious, reproachful way that was almost disconcerting.

"Sit down," he said.

"So you think you have something to say that will surprise me?" I remarked, by way of opening the conversation.

"I not only think so; I know so," Murchison replied. "Now, look here, Rogers. You haven't played fair. You agreed to drop all this sleuthing and to go back to America. You didn't go. That was not acting on the level. It may be fun for you to keep following me around all over creation, but it is exceedingly distasteful to me, and I had had enough of it two months and more ago, and a great deal too much. I couldn't help wondering why you kept up so useless and absurd a quest. Knowing myself that I was innocent, and sizing you up for a man of more than ordinary intelligence, as well as a detective of long experience, it seemed odd to me that you should persist in keeping up on what you, too, must have known was a false trail. I was at last forced to the conclusion that you were trying to manufacture evidence to incriminate me, in spite of the fact that you were aware I was not guilty. Why,

I asked myself, why try to fasten the crime on me when you might be putting in your time to much better advantage hunting for the real criminal? It seemed to me that there must be some hidden motive in all this, so I went into the Hawkshaw business on my own account."

"Well, what did *you* discover?" I asked.

"Enough to explain your extraordinary actions, for one thing."

"Indeed, and what else?" I interposed.

"The actual criminals!"

"So you won't have to cough up that reward, after all?" I sneered.

"Oh, it has cost me a good deal more than two thousand dollars," he said, with an exasperating smile.

"How do you know you've got them?" I asked. "Have you recovered the jewels?"

"Not yet," Murchison replied; "but I know now where some of them are."

"I never doubted that you knew where all of them were all the time," I retorted.

"Murchison laughed. "Oh, chuck it!" he said. "I'm on to your game, all right. You needn't keep up that tone with me any longer. Why, man, I've got the girl; and, what's more, I've got her written confession!"

"What girl?" I demanded. "Come, you might as well out with your whole concoction at once, without beating about the bush and wasting my time. Let's see your precious document."

"It seemed to me that the desperate man must have been driven to more forgery. I did not fear him. I was sure that I had him cornered, and that he was making his last futile fight for liberty.

"What girl?" he repeated after me. "Why, who but your good-looking confederate. She is here, and she has the writing with her. I prefer that you should read it in her presence." He rang, and Valadon appeared from the next room. "Please ask the lady in Room 327 to step in here," he said. And then: "I shall not need you any more this afternoon—or ever," he added.

'You can report to your employer when he leaves, if you care to'—with a nod in my direction.

"Valadon glanced inquiringly at me.

"Bring the lady in,' I said.

"In a moment the door opened, and an attractively dressed woman entered. Without looking at me, she crossed over and sat down with her back to the window.

"Murchison shut the door after her, and saying, 'You will understand the desirability of entire privacy,' locked it, and put the key in his pocket. I paid little heed to his actions. My attention was completely absorbed by the woman. She was the living image of Barbara, except for her reddish-gold hair and her somewhat fuller figure. Undoubtedly she was Barbara's sister. Yet, looking at her features only, I could have sworn it was Barbara herself. There were dark circles under her eyes, which showed signs of recent weeping. She was pale, and her face was drawn into tense lines, as if she were under the influence of a strong moral excitement. She kept her hands tightly clenched, as one does when about to undergo some physical or mental suffering, the extent of which cannot be forecast. She kept her face half-turned from me, her eyes looking down under her long, dark lashes—Barbara's lashes.

"'Miss Marcy,' said Murchison, stepping past her and locking the door leading into his bedroom, 'have you that paper you dictated this morning?'

"She said no word, but opened the little Russia leather bag she carried, and handed him a long white envelope, from which he took some typewritten manuscript.

"I was now far more interested in the woman than in anything she might have written. Was she Barbara, or Barbara's sister? Such a strong facial resemblance might exist in twins, but not in sisters separated by several years. Yes, in spite of hair and figure, I knew that she was, indeed, Barbara. But under what strange hypnotic influence had she fallen, to sit there so subdued, so unlike her own bright, sprightly self, treating me like a total stranger, or,

rather, as if I had no real existence to her?

"Murchison gave me the paper. 'Read it,' he said.

"I straightened out the sheets and glanced at the first line. It was headed—"Confession of Barbara Marcy, *in re* the Jewel Robbery at the House of Joshua D. Belding, Esq., No. —, Riverside Drive, New York City, U. S. A., March 2, 19—."

Here Fenway broke in on Rogers' narrative. "I think it would be well," he said, "for us to have that confession verbatim. I shall ask Walford to read aloud to us the copy I made at your request when you told me the story the first time."

He stepped over to the safe in which he kept his most valuable records; and from a private compartment to which he alone had the key, Fenway produced a package, from which he took a sealed envelope. Opening this, he handed me the several closely written sheets which it contained.

"Your recollection of the events," said Fenway, addressing Rogers, "is remarkably close in form to the tale as you related it before; but, as I expected, you have made some additions and omissions which are not without their significance, as I shall point out to you when we come to discuss the application of these facts to our present problem. You can moisten your throat, which must be dry, while Walford spells you for a while," he added, pushing the bottle and siphon toward the ex-detective. "Now, Walford, it's your turn."

This is what I read to them.

CHAPTER IX.

"In the interests of justice, for my own peace of mind, and without duress or hope of escaping due punishment for my offenses, of my own free will I now relate the true account of the theft of jewels from the house of Joshua D. Belding, Esq., No. —, Riverside Drive, New York, U. S. A., on the

night of March 2, 19—, and of the part I took in the affair.

"I am, by occupation, a trained nurse. Being temporarily disengaged, last February I rented a room in the apartment of Plimpton Rogers, Esq., a detective officer of the municipal police force of New York, and soon became on friendly terms with him, and with his family. In the latter part of that month, Mr. Rogers informed me that he had secured a private engagement at the house of Joshua D. Belding, Esq., for the evening of March second, to act as a guard, as I understood it, over the valuable jewels to be worn by Mrs. Belding at the ball that was to take place there that night. He desired a woman to assist him, who should act as maid in the ladies' dressing-room, observe the jewels worn by women guests, keep on the watch for suspicious characters, and note the actions of the servants and guests on the second floor, while he looked out for the floor below. He said that I should be well paid for a few hours' light work, and I gladly accepted his offer.

"As the day approached, he began to talk more and more about the jewels, their tremendous value, and the temptation that they offered to any one who was willing to take the risk of stealing them. No one was likely to make the attempt, he said, except, perhaps, a man named Lionel Murchison, well known in society, who had, nevertheless, Mr. Rogers assured me, already perpetrated several daring robberies, and who was to be present as a guest. Although morally certain of this Murchison's guilt, Mr. Rogers told me that he had so far been unable to get any legal evidence of it.

"He then unfolded a plan which he said he had devised to outwit this Mr. Murchison, and, as he expressed it, to beat him at his own game. Mr. Rogers proposed that he and I should contrive an occasion for taking the jewels ourselves. He said that we, of course, would not be suspected, but that suspicion would inevitably fall upon Murchison. Mr. Rogers said that he would hide the jewels in Mr. Murchison's

apartment, and then swear out a warrant against him, search his rooms, and find the gems. He said that in this way he would be able to get a confession from Mr. Murchison in regard to the other jewel robberies in which he had been concerned that winter.

"I did not like the plan, which seemed to offer a great deal of risk without adequate reward; but Mr. Rogers said that his reputation as a detective, and, indeed, his position on the force, depended on his success in this matter; that if Mr. Murchison failed to confess to the other robberies he would acknowledge himself beaten, restore the jewels, made public acknowledgment of what he had done, exonerate Mr. Murchison, and resign from the police. He told me that it was a desperate case which required a desperate remedy. He added that although I greatly exaggerated the risk, he would pay me five hundred dollars if I would follow his instructions, and that he would also give me a signed paper stating the understanding upon which I had agreed to help him.

"My friendship for Mr. Rogers, my confidence in his judgment, and the amount that I should be able to earn, whether the enterprise were successful or not, combined with a constitutional fondness for adventure and excitement, outbalanced my own better judgment, and at last I consented.

"Mr. Rogers and I arrived at the Belding mansion on Riverside Drive at half-past seven the evening of March second, 19—. I wore my ordinary street dress, and carried my maid's costume in a suit-case. I changed my dress in the bedroom of Delia Maguire, the nurse of Franky Belding, the five-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Belding. Delia's room was on the second story of the house, and adjoined the nursery, with which it communicated by a door. I placed my street dress in the suit-case, which I left open on Delia's bed. The nursery was directly across the hall from the room used as the ladies' dressing-room. Delia had lived in the family for many years, and it was at Mr. Rogers' suggestion that she, rather than

any one of the other maids, who were all newcomers, was assigned to assist me in the dressing-room.

"At about eleven o'clock, while Delia was busy helping some ladies, I followed one of the guests out into the hall on the pretext of arranging her train, and slipped into Delia's room, and so into the nursery. I poured five drops of a liquid from a bottle that Mr. Rogers had given me for that purpose, into a glass of water, half-aroused the sleeping boy, made him take a few swallows, wiped his mouth, laid his head back on his pillow, added a few more drops to the water, filled up the glass, and left it on the table by the crib, and quickly returned to the dressing-room by the same route, unfolding a clean handkerchief as I did so, and, tucking it into my belt, to explain my errand, if necessary. As a matter of fact, Delia had not noticed my absence.

"While the guests were at supper, I remarked that the smell of the food made me feel hungry, and Delia offered to go to the pantry and get some salad and ice-cream for us. As she went down the back stairway, I went into the nursery, lifted Franky from his bed, wrapped a silk quilt around him, and took him in my arms down the same stairs and laid him on a shelf in a coat-closet at the foot of the stairs. I ran quickly to the dressing-room, and sat where I had been sitting when Delia left me. She soon came in with some supper. We were not long eating, and I offered to take the plates down to the pantry. As I went out into the hall I said to Delia:

"'Master Franky must be a healthy little fellow to sleep through all this noise, and with the door open, too.'

"'For Heaven's sake,' she cried, 'however did I come to do that?' stepping across the hall as she spoke.

"'Oh,' I said, 'perhaps one of the guests opened it by mistake.'

"'Well, I'll just see if he's all right,' she exclaimed, and went into the room.

"She came out instantly, very much frightened, and said that Franky was not there. I calmed her as best I could, and suggested that the little boy might

have been disturbed or had perhaps walked in his sleep, that we should probably find him in her room or in his mother's.

"We made a careful search of all the rooms on that floor, but, of course, found nothing. I then sent Delia to the two upper floors, cautioning her to search thoroughly, looking under beds and into closets, while I summoned his mother.

"I then went down the front stairs and into the dining-room, to the table where Mrs. Belding was sitting, and told her that I was afraid that Franky was not well, and that she had better come up and look at him. She at once followed me into the hall, where we were joined by Mr. Rogers, who accompanied us up-stairs. I then told her that Franky was missing. She burst into the nursery, Mr. Rogers and I after her. I shut the door into the hall. Mrs. Belding was much agitated at the sight of the empty crib, and by my description of our search for the little boy.

"When Delia came in and said that she had not been able to find Franky up-stairs, Mrs. Belding declared that he had been kidnaped, and was greatly overcome. I handed her the glass of water into which I had previously poured the drops given me by Mr. Rogers, and she took several swallows of it.

"While we were discussing what was next to be done, Mrs. Belding began to lose consciousness. Leaving her to the care of Mr. Rogers, I told Delia to run up to the roof to see if the scuttle were open, while I went to call Mr. Belding. Delia went up-stairs and I went down. Half-way down the back stairs was a tall window about two and a half feet wide, with one pane of glass in each sash. I took from my hair a hair-pin, previously given me by Mr. Rogers, that had a small diamond set in it, with a sharp point. With that I cut all around the lower pane, close to the sash. I replaced the pin in my hair, went down to the closet at the foot of the stairs, took Franky in my arms, carried him up as far as the window, and laid him down again on one of the steps.

"I next drew a revolver from my pocket, and, shrieking 'Murder!' at the top of my voice, I fired a shot into the ceiling. I then pushed my left shoulder against the window-glass, which fell into the yard below, one of the sharp pieces, however, piercing through the sleeve of my dress and making a long cut on my arm. I then fired another shot out of the window.

"Many people soon came rushing to me from below, and a few men, Mr. Rogers among the first, from above. In the meantime, I had picked up the little boy, and, pointing out into the yard with my revolver, announced that I had had an encounter with a man who was trying to steal Franky; that I had shot at him, that he had stabbed me, and then jumped through the window and escaped into the next yard, which belonged to a block of flats.

"Mr. Rogers ordered that no one should leave the house. I put Franky into Mr. Belding's arms, and he and Mr. Rogers went up to look after Mrs. Belding, while I went down to telephone to the police-station for assistance, telling the guests that the stairs must be kept clear until the police arrived.

"Mr. Rogers came down the front stairs in a few moments, and announced that all of Mrs. Belding's jewels had been stolen from her person, as she lay in a faint, while he had been investigating the shooting on the back stairs. The police soon appeared, and, at Mr. Murchison's suggestion, all the guests allowed themselves to be searched as they left the house. I was searched, and so were all the servants. The jewels were not found.

"Mr. Rogers then said that he would remain and search the house; so, as I was suffering considerably from the cut on my arm, I said I would go home, and tell his wife not to expect him until the morning. Mr. Rogers went upstairs and brought down my suit-case closed and locked; Mrs. Belding, who had recovered consciousness, sent me a cloak to wear, and Mr. Belding put me into a cab.

"Everything that I had done, as I have related above, had been done ex-

actly in accordance with the instructions previously given to me by Mr. Rogers, including my description of my encounter with the imaginary kidnap on the back stairs. I had, however, added the incident of the stabbing, in order to account for the cut on my arm made by the falling glass.

"On arriving home, I put the suitcase in my closet, and went to bed. The next day Mr. Rogers came in while his wife was at market, and unlocked my suit-case, to which he had the key. I lifted out my waist, and he took from under it a linen bag with a running string at the mouth. He emptied the bag upon my bed, and there I saw all the jewelry worn by Mrs. Belding the night before.

"Mr. Rogers asked me if I could guess how much they were all worth. I said about five hundred thousand dollars; and he said, "nearer a million." Some of the stones were very large, and it seemed quite possible. I asked him when he was going to place the jewelry in Mr. Murchison's apartment; and he replied: 'In a day or two.'

"I begged him to take the valuables in his charge at once, as I did not wish to have the responsibility of them. He declared that there was no place that he could put them, that I must keep them in my suit-case, and must not leave the apartment while they were there.

"Several days went by, and still he had not taken the jewels. Then, one morning, when his wife was out, he came in and said that it seemed a shame to lose possession of all that wealth. There was enough, he said, to make us both rich; and he asked me if I would be willing to divide with him. We would never be suspected, he declared. We could dispose of a few of the less important jewels without fear of detection, and so get enough to keep us going for a few years. Later, when the recollection of the loss had passed out of people's minds, we could realize on the rest. We should have to keep working for the present, so as to disarm suspicion, but could begin to make scattered investments that would account

for our prosperity after a short period. He evidently had the whole plan carefully worked out.

"At first I thought he was joking; but when I found that he was in earnest, I indignantly refused to have anything to do with so dishonorable a scheme. Mr. Rogers laughed, and said that I had better think it over, or he might have to arrest me for stealing the jewels. It would, he said, be rather a reflection on him to find the thief in his own house, but he would have to do it.

"I defied him to try to incriminate me, and called his attention to the paper he had given me, explaining the understanding upon which I had undertaken to help him. He laughed again, and asked me where the agreement was. I opened the drawer of my bureau and took out my purse, in which I had placed the paper—and it was gone!

"I saw, then, that I was at his mercy. The jewels were in my suit-case, and I had carried them out of the Beldings' house on the night of the robbery. How they got there was for me to explain. In short, Mr. Rogers so worked upon my fears that he forced me to acquiesce in his plans.

"He still kept up a pretense of shadowing Mr. Murchison, and at last he told me that Mr. Murchison was going abroad, and that he should sail on the same steamer. He then arranged for his wife and son to go for a day's visit to the country; and that day Mr. Rogers and I spent in the kitchen, concealing the gems in small cakes of maple-sugar which we made from larger bricks which he had ordered me to buy and which we melted down for the purpose.

"He carried these with him in his trunk when he sailed.

"They were done up in a pasteboard box, together with some fancy work that Mrs. Rogers supposed I was sending to an imaginary older sister in London. Mrs. Rogers understood that her husband was to leave the box in the office of the hotel, and that my sister was to call for it.

"Two days after Mr. Rogers' de-

parture for Europe, I told his wife that I had received an offer to travel with a lady, and that I should have to give up my room. I changed the color of my hair, gave my figure an appearance of greater fulness, and took passage on the *Gothic*, on Tuesday, thus leaving New York only three days after Mr. Rogers.

"According to his instruction, I put up at a boarding-house at 93 Surbiton Gardens, London, where I had previously engaged a room by mail. I went at once to the hotel where Mr. Rogers was stopping and asked for the box addressed to my sister, and received it.

"On returning to my room and opening the box, I found only three of the cakes of maple-sugar, which, on breaking up, I found to contain only a few of the smaller diamonds. These, in accordance with oral instructions I had received from Mr. Rogers, I took to various cities of Europe, disposing of them to jewelers, stating that I had lost my letter of credit and was temporarily in need of ready money, until a new one could be issued. I made use of an assumed name, as he had instructed me to do.

"As soon as I sold a stone, I bought post-office money-orders, to as near the amount as I could, payable to Mr. Rogers in London. In all these proceedings I had acted exactly as I had been told to do by Mr. Rogers. I departed from his instructions, however, in not mailing the orders to him from the cities where I purchased them. I kept hoping that some way would open up for me to escape from his power, and to enable me to restore, if not the few jewels I had sold, at least the money I had received for them.

"At Cracow I found myself at the table d'hôte sitting next to a man whom I vaguely remembered having seen at Buda-Pesth. We entered into conversation, and he disturbed me by insisting on talking about precious stones, of which he said he was an amateur. It made me feel nervous at the time, but I persuaded myself that I was only the victim of a guilty conscience. I left early the next day for Warsaw.

"When I arrived in Dresden, four days later, I was sure that I saw the same man in the railway-station; but when I looked for him, he had disappeared in the crowd. I stayed a week in Dresden, selling two or three diamonds, and on the last day I met my Cracow acquaintance, face to face, as I was coming out of the post-office. He spoke to me; but I was not cordial, and passed on, after a few words of formal greeting.

"The man had in his hand a stamped letter which he was about to mail. I glanced at it, and made out the words 'Valadon' and 'London.' This frightened me very much, as I knew that one of Mr. Rogers' assistants was named Valadon. As I still had a few diamonds to dispose of, I determined to return at once to Amsterdam, where I should be nearer London, and to sell them there. I started within two hours, and the day after my arrival, while riding in a trolley-car, I saw this same man on the sidewalk.

"I had by this time sold all the jewels entrusted to me; and, fearing that I might be arrested any moment, I immediately mailed all the accumulated post-office money-orders to Mr. Rogers, together with some bank-notes, keeping only enough for my immediate personal needs. I then hastened to my hotel and left at once for London.

"I was certain that I had been followed; but could not, of course, imagine in whose interests. Finally, it occurred to me Mr. Rogers might have been keeping track of my movements; and I felt so humiliated that I was greatly tempted to give myself up to the police as soon as I reached London. I went, however, to 93 Surbiton Gardens, and lay awake nearly all night, trying to make up my mind what was best to do.

"Directly after breakfast I received a call from Mr. Murchison. He told me that ever since the loss of the Belding jewels he had been trying to find the thief or thieves, and that at last he had succeeded. He told me that the evident determination of Mr. Rogers to fasten the crime on him, despite his innocence,

had aroused his suspicions, and that he had engaged detectives to watch both Mr. Rogers and me. He knew, from them, that I had followed Mr. Rogers to London, and that I had been selling diamonds in different cities in Europe.

"His theory of the way in which the theft had been committed fitted so nearly with the facts that I saw he had only to arrest us both to bring the precise truth to light. I was glad to unburden myself of the load of sin and duplicity that had been weighing me down for months, and readily made a complete confession to him.

"At Mr. Murchison's request I have now written down, according to the very best of my recollection, the entire story of the robbery, and of my unfortunate and deeply regretted share in it. I am prepared to take whatever punishment the law may direct. No term of imprisonment, however long, can be as grievous to be borne as the overpowering realization of my own weakness and wickedness.

"I could wish never to see or to hear of Plimpton Rogers again, but I have consented to meet him once more in Mr. Murchison's presence, in order to acknowledge, before them both, the genuineness of this my full confession. I humbly accept this as part of the price that I must pay for the evil that I have done, not only to Mr. Lionel Murchison but to Mr. and Mrs. Belding and to my conscience.

(Signed) "-----"

CHAPTER X.

"Ingenious," I said, as I laid the last sheet of the confession on the table.

"Daring," said Rogers.

"Dangerous," said Fenway.

"Yet not so dangerous as it appears," added Rogers. "Its safety lay in its very boldness. Of course, I saw at once exactly how the job had been worked, as Murchison undoubtedly intended that I should. Only a man as clever as he had shown himself to be in conceiving and executing the robbery could have given the entire snap away in so open

a manner, and, at the same time, have turned it into evidence against his most dangerous enemy. It—it was devilish! The whole business had evidently been calculated to its least and last effect before the first move had been made in the game. I had been an easy mark from the very beginning.

"Imagine, if you can, my feelings that afternoon when I saw how I had been duped in my own home, how I had been made the thieves' agent in carrying the jewelry out of the Beldings' house, and how—worst of all—I had actually taken the plunder to Europe for them in my own trunk while I was following Murchison and searching his stateroom! Imagine my feelings now, to-day; for I assure you that I have not got over the effects of that disclosure yet, and I guess I never shall.

"When I had finished reading the confession, I did not put it down, as you have done, but kept it in my hand, while I let the impression of it sink into my mind and waited for Murchison's next move. I felt sure that he was as little anxious as I was for the document to get into other hands than ours, and I wondered, accordingly, how he expected to make effective use of it. I had not long to wait.

"Now, Rogers," he said, after I had sat silent for a few moments with my eyes cast down, my brain meanwhile working at a mile-a-minute clip, "what do you think of me for a detective?"

"Come," said I, "what's your game? This is a very interesting document, and with the change of certain names and a slight alteration of some of the incidents would no doubt present a very accurate statement of the facts. I don't suppose, for an instant, however, that you have composed this story just for my amusement or for your own. I have read it. What do you propose to do with it?"

"That is a question that you must help me to decide," replied Murchison seriously.

"I could not help admiring the 'nerve' of the man. He had, in practically so many words, told me everything I had been trying so hard and so vainly to

find out about him; yet not for one second did he step out of his character as the unjustly suspected gentleman. As a piece of acting it was superb, although his audience consisted of only two persons, neither of whom he had the least expectation, or, indeed, intention, of deceiving. He had laid his marked cards upon the table, and still he persisted in his rôle of injured innocence.

"When I had uncovered all the facts I needed," he continued, "and went to this lady to place them before her, I did so with the hope that I might be able to persuade her that it would be to her ultimate advantage to turn State's evidence. I found her, as you have read, not only willing but anxious to tell me everything, without any implication of a bargain. I had nothing against Miss Marcy when I asked her assistance. When she had told me her story, she had my sincere sympathy."

"Oh, cut it out, and come down to business," I interrupted.

"His acting was fine enough, but I can't say that I was in a state of mind to enjoy it. But he couldn't cut it out. It was this way, I guess. His whole tune had been played on the one key, as a musician might say; and he didn't dare, now that the finale was on, to change it. To put it differently, in order to make others believe in him, he had to believe in himself, or, at least, to counterfeit such a belief so convincingly as practically to deceive himself.

"I am getting down to "business," as you call it, as quickly as I can," he continued. "I have no desire to prolong an interview which cannot be agreeable to any one of us. When I discovered the circumstances under which Miss Marcy had been led into her unhappy predicament, I was loath, I admit it, to involve her publicly in the matter. I believe that she deserves every consideration that a gentleman can give her. I even asked myself what I had to gain by publicly denouncing you? Revenge for all the trouble and suspicion you have helped to heap upon me? Yes. But revenge, I considered, is, after all, a very unworthy motive for any action.

'All that I really desire is relief from the constant espionage that you have put upon me. My reputation has suffered nothing at your hands. I do not seek "vindication." My friends and, I believe, people generally, give me their confidence. Those in authority who may still harbor some doubt in regard to my integrity would come to the same way of thinking if you were to return to New York and to tell them, as, of course you truthfully can, that your efforts to associate me in any way with last winter's jewel thefts have been fruitless, and that you have given up the case as hopeless.'

"I dare say they would," I remarked; "and do you expect me to do it now? You've certainly got a gall, Mr. Murchison."

"I certainly do expect you to do it," he answered.

"And what's to make me?" I inquired.

"That," said Murchison, pointing to the 'confession' in my hands.

"That?" I said. "This for that?" and I tore the paper up and across.

Murchison smiled. "I had anticipated something of that sort," he remarked, "and had provided for it, you may rest assured. Here is a duplicate," he went on, as Barbara produced another copy from her bag and gave it to him, "and there is still the original, which is beyond your reach or mine, except in a certain contingency."

"I suppose," Murchison continued calmly, resuming his argument, "that strict moralists might consider that I was shirking my full duty if I failed to use this confession against you; but, in the first place, I am not a policeman. I have done, I think, all that could reasonably be expected of me in offering a reward for the conviction of the thief and for the discovery of the jewelry. If the reward is not earned, my responsibility ceases. It might further be urged that it was my duty—you would have imagined that he was addressing a Friday night prayer-meeting—"simply in the interests of justice, or as a citizen, or as a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Belding, to make this paper public. But

I believe that a grosser wrong would be done by allowing Miss Marcy's confession to become public than by keeping Mrs. Belding separated from her diamonds, or by allowing you to walk about a free man. The Beldings are rich, and can better afford to lose their gewgaws, costly as they are, than this poor young woman can afford to lose what is most precious to her—her good name. As for you, you will, of course, resign from the force on your return, and—"

"Oh, I will, will I?" I broke in, not quite too dumfounded by the man's boundless assurance to find my voice at this piece of effrontery. "Come, now," I continued, "I've listened long enough to this nonsense. What's to prevent me from arresting you now, the both of you?"

"Your regard for your reputation, I think," said Murchison. "Think it over. What will you gain by it? What won't you lose? If you're too much surprised to think, let me think for you. A signed copy of Miss Marcy's confession, in a sealed envelope, is at this moment in the hands of one of the clerks of this hotel. He has instructions to send it by a special messenger at half-past five o'clock"—Murchison looked at his watch—"that is, in a little less than half an hour, unless I personally demand it of him before that time. If you are determined to arrest us, it will be impossible for you to swear out the warrants and to get the necessary authorization before to-morrow afternoon. Long before you are ready to proceed, Miss Marcy's confession will be in the hands of the Scotland Yard people, who will be taking the preliminary steps to land you yourself in jail. It is, of course, my aim to keep Miss Marcy's name out of the affair; but if you are bound to drag it in she naturally prefers to place her own version of the story before the police first."

"That means that you stand a very good chance of being extradited, tried, and convicted. I shall come off scot-free, and, although Miss Marcy's name will receive painful notoriety, she will, in all likelihood, escape prosecution,

while her offense will be generally condoned.

"Suppose, even, that owing to your prominent position in the detective bureau, and by reason of the official "pull" that you can command, you are able so to pervert the course of justice as to turn the tables on us eventually, to secure your acquittal and our conviction—you see, I am willing to conceive such a possibility—what then? You will be the laughing-stock of the public and of your associates, and discredited in the eyes of your superiors, as an officer who was only able to detect a crime by means of what will be regarded as, after all, a master stroke of boldness on the part of two clever operators who had blinded you successfully as long as they were content to keep silent.

"In fact, judging from the security in which we could have dwelt, supposing, as you affect to claim, that Miss Marcy was my confederate and not yours, is it likely that any jury would believe that we would thus voluntarily place in your hands the instrument with which to accomplish our destruction? No, even granting your ultimate acquittal, you would no longer be trusted, and would have in very shame to get off the force. How much better to do so now, when you can resign without any loss of public esteem, and will have no difficulty in finding some other avenue for your doubtless conspicuous abilities."

"Hold on, Murchison," I interrupted; "you make me very tired. Your palaver is very plausible, but you can't convince me for one instant that you would ever allow that confession to get into the hands of the police."

"Indeed I can, and very easily," Murchison replied. "There is the house telephone. It is perfectly possible for you to verify what I have told you. Call up the room-clerk, and ask him if he has such a message as I have described."

CHAPTER X.

"I went to the phone, and told the switchboard operator to give me the room-clerk," Rogers went on. "I asked

him if he had an envelope addressed to the chief of police. 'Yes, sir,' he said. 'What were his instructions in regard to it?' 'To forward it by special messenger to Scotland Yard at five-thirty, unless Mr. Murchison countermanded the order in person before that hour.'

"Hold the wire a moment," I requested. Then, turning to Murchison, I said to him: "Yes, the clerk says that he has such an envelope, but who is to know what is inside of it? There may only be a piece of blank paper."

"Quite right. I had expected that much perspicacity, even from you. Hold the receiver to your ear while I talk through the transmitter."

"Is this Mr. Perkins?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," came the reply, which I repeated to Murchison in each instance.

"Have you the envelope addressed to the chief of police where you can readily refer to it?"

"Yes, sir; I can get it in a few seconds. Hold the wire, please." There was a moment's pause. Then came the words: "I have it now, sir."

"Kindly open the envelope," directed Murchison.

"Yes, sir; I have done so."

"What is inside?"

"Another envelope similarly addressed."

"Is it sealed?"

"No, sir; it is open."

"Kindly take out the enclosure."

"Yes, sir."

"What is it?"

"It appears to be several typewritten sheets, fastened together at the heads of the pages."

"Please read the title."

"Confession of Barbara Marcy."

"Thank you. Look at the last page, please. Is it signed?"

"Yes, sir; in purple ink: 'Barbara Marcy.'"

"Please hold the wire for half a second." Then, turning to me, Murchison said, handing me the duplicate of the paper which I had destroyed: "Ask him to read any line on any page."

"I chose the fifth line on the third page. The clerk read it to me over the

wire, and it corresponded word for word with that of the paper that I held.

"That is all, Mr. Perkins," said Murchison. "I am greatly indebted to you. Will you kindly replace the document in the envelope, seal it, and send it to the chief of police at half-past five, unless I call for it myself in the meantime? Thank you again for your trouble. I rely, of course, on your absolute discretion in this matter."

"No trouble at all, sir," came the voice of the clerk. "I shall treat the matter as strictly confidential, and follow your instructions to the letter. It is now eighteen minutes past five. In twelve minutes the paper will be on its way to Scotland Yard, unless you come to claim it. Good-by, sir." And he rang off.

I hung up the receiver and looked at Murchison. Then my glance wandered to Barbara. She was still sitting in the chair that Murchison had placed for her when she came in, her eyes fixed on the toes of her boots. She had neither spoken nor moved, except to give Murchison the papers, since she had first come into the room.

"Barbara," I asked, "are you going to stand for this?"

"Yes," she answered. And that was the entire extent of her conversation that afternoon.

"Well, what's the verdict?" inquired Murchison, his watch in his hand. "The time is passing, and it will take us a good two minutes to go down to the office."

I thought quickly. Murchison may have been bluffing, but I believed him. I had to acknowledge myself defeated all along the line. He was the grandest scoundrel I have ever encountered, and the most resourceful. I not only believed that he would send the confession, but that he would make good in the end; and I must admit that I did not relish the idea of spending ten or twenty years in Sing Sing for a crime that I had never committed. Even if I came out on top in the end, I thought of the humiliation I must undergo in the meantime—arrest, trial, and the inevitable loss of prestige, not to men-

tion the expense of it all. Murchison certainly was a wonderful judge of human nature, and he read my character like an open book.

"Then there was another consideration; and it influenced me, although I was perfectly aware of the cold-blooded, premeditated calculation with which he had played the card. I refer to Barbara. Hurt as I was at the trick she had played on me, it was, after all, a feeling of disappointment rather than of anger that I cherished toward her. It was impossible to see her sitting there, dumb, cowed, and broken, and not to have the most poignant sympathy and compassion for her. It was plain to me that Murchison had got her into his power in some such devilish way as he had intimated that I had done, in the 'confession' which she had signed, but of which I had no doubt that he was the author. It was clear to me that he intended that I should understand by the wording of the statement that she had not been a free agent, that the part she had taken had been assumed in the first instance under a misapprehension. Her manner alone was sufficient to confirm the idea. My whole nature rose in revolt against the man and the dastardly, selfish, brutal way in which he was now making use of his beautiful, deluded tool. No; he was too much for me. I threw up my hands.

"I agree," I exclaimed.

"Then let us go down to the office," said Murchison. "We have just seven minutes. But first please sign this agreement that I have drawn up. For your own protection, you may have this copy of the "confession."

"I read the paper he placed before me on the table. It was a brief statement embodying the terms to which I had orally acquiesced. I put my signature to it, and he gave me the duplicate 'confession.'

"In two minutes more, the room-clerk was placing in my hands the envelope addressed to the chief of police. I opened it, and there, plainly enough, was the original document of the copy that Murchison had given me. I turned it over to him, left the hotel, took the

next steamer for New York, announced my failure to find anything tending to incriminate Murchison, and, as I had agreed with the chief, resigned from the force. I had no trouble in securing, at a better salary, a position as superintendent of the big sky-scraper where I still boss the window-cleaners and scrub-ladies. The only person to whom I have confided the story is you, Mr. Fenway; and now you, Mr. Walford," he added, looking at me, I thought, a trifle regretfully.

"By the way, Mr. Rogers," I said, taking up the last page of the "confession," "I notice that in this copy that Fenway has made, the signature is left blank. Was it so in the one you showed him?"

"Yes," replied Rogers. "The 'confession' which was given me to read, as well as the one to be sent to Scotland Yard, was in typewriting, as I have said; but as Murchison had evidently had the work done for him by a public typist, all the names and addresses by which an outside party would be able to identify the circumstances were left blank and had been filled in with a pen. I had supposed that the copy which Murchison had given me to take away was identical in this respect with the others, but on looking at it the next morning, I found that the blanks had not been filled in. I penciled in the omissions, however, except, I believe, the signature, before I showed it to Mr. Fenway."

"Why did you ask that question, Walford?" Fenway broke in.

"I was only wondering how incriminating a document it was that Murchison had been so willing to let out of his hands."

"Walford, my boy," said Fenway, "do you know that occasionally you show glimmerings of actual intelligence? Rogers," he continued, "has it ever occurred to you to examine your copy of the 'confession' under a microscope?"

"I can't say that it ever has," said the ex-detective. "Why should I?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Fenway. "I think, if I were in your place,

I shouldn't. However, I should like to do so very much. It would not hurt my feelings if I should discover indications of pen scratches and—"

"By the jumping Jehosaphat! You mean sympathetic ink?" cried Rogers, his face empurpled with sudden emotion, as he reached for his handkerchief to wipe away the perspiration that beaded his forehead.

"Call it *unsympathetic* ink, if you wish to name it," suggested Fenway, "ink that would stay black—or was it purple? Yes, purple—for an hour or so; then fade to violet, and disappear altogether by morning. If such a document as you found in your pocket the day after your interview with Murchison and Miss Marcy had come into the hands of the London chief, it might have aroused his curiosity, but I doubt if it would have caused you much inconvenience."

"Stung again!" gasped Rogers. "If I ain't the chump!"

In moments of excitement, as in hours of relaxation, the former police officer was apt to lapse into the vernacular of "the force."

CHAPTER XII.

"Mr. Fenway," Rogers went on, as the import of Fenway's suggestion sank into his mind, "you know that I never was jealous of you, that I was always glad to have your assistance in any difficult case, that I have always been glad and proud to call you my friend because, well, for one thing, you never set up to be a little tin Sherlock Holmes. You never claimed to be able to tell the age of a man's wife from the way his socks were darned. It was all honest brain-work with you, just keen perception and ratty-ossy-ossy—yes, thank you, ratiocination, that's the word. But I may as well confess, now as ever, that for straight-away, ordinary, every-day sleuthing I thought your methods were too finicky. I regarded you as, I may say, a professional looks upon an amateur—O. K. in your line, and worth coming to for an occasional idea, but—to put it plainly—not the real thing. I

—I take it all back. I see now that you've got me beaten to a finish. Why, I never was in it. I'm just where I belong, bossing my tile-scrubbing brigade down in Nassau Street. But, admit it yourself, just to save my face, wasn't that Murchison a 'peacherino'? Isn't he the king bluffer of the bunch? Did you ever run up against his like?"

"I don't think I ever did," assented Fenway. "And that is what makes the Belding robbery so interesting as a problem in psychology. One would think that so sharp and skilful an operator as Murchison has proved himself to be would have stopped working in that particular and distinctive line with the third robbery. It spelled for him the extreme limit of safety, and I agree with you that up to that time he had been operating entirely single-handed. But now the woman comes into the game, and that introduces an element always disturbing to logical processes.

"There must have been some powerful motive behind Murchison to force him to make the desperate venture involved in putting through the Belding affair—something more than the mere magnitude of stake, although the winning of it would make him independent for life. We must consider if he would have deemed that alone worth the risk; for, mind you, he was no ordinary thief. He was a gentleman, with a reputation that was as valuable to him as any money he could gain. Yet we see him admitting to his confidence, for the first time, a confederate. You have shown us how carefully he laid his plans, even to the point where he fore-saw the necessity of exposing his hand to you for the sake of getting rid of you.

"The only rational conclusion we can draw from this is that, having been induced, no matter how, to hazard everything on this fourth and extraordinarily perilous undertaking, he had resolved that it should also be his last. Otherwise, he would undoubtedly have simply allowed you to follow him about until you grew tired and quit of your own accord.

"Cherchez la femme—find the woman—says the wise, if suspicious, Frenchman. We have not far to look in Murchison's case. And having found her—where she has been all along, right before our eyes—are we not compelled, at the same time, to revise our first estimate of her? If Miss Marcy exerted the influence that drove Murchison, against his wiser judgment, to engage in the Belding robbery—and we may start with that as a fair working hypothesis—she must have possessed some unusual power over him.

"Let us see how the problem works out if we assume that Murchison was acting in this affair as the tool of Miss Marcy instead of vice versa, as you have supposed. She certainly took a leading part in it; her interest, presumably, was at least as large as his, and her behavior is as consistent with that idea as with the other—perhaps more so. That obviously leads us to the conclusion that she had knowledge of his former crimes. How this knowledge came to her—whether she discovered it herself or whether he confided in her, and what led him to do so—we may pass over for the moment.

"Maybe the answer to the next question that we shall ask ourselves will enlighten us on this point also. What was the motive that led both Murchison and your friend Barbara to take you into their confidence in order to force you to withdraw from the case and to abandon your watch on Murchison's movements? Was it the need of money? It hardly looks so, in view of the ten thousand francs they sent to you. Was it fear? Their action was brave to the point of recklessness. What stronger motive could there have been? Was it love?"

"You've got it," cried Rogers. "Of course, those two couldn't join forces so long as I had my eye on Murchison. But they must have been pretty hard hit to be willing to take such chances."

"That is just the point," Fenway acquiesced; "and that is why I am going to ask you to go up to the Ramapo Inn to-morrow morning, if you think your twenty-three-story building won't run

away in the meantime, and see if Mrs. Lionel Murchison bears any resemblance to your late lodger, Miss Barbara Marcy. The 'Social Register' says that Mrs. Murchison was a Mademoiselle Frances B. G. M. Van Kloep," he added, as he held up to our view the little black-bound volume with the red stripes.

"The name she gave me in the letter from Holland. That's the party," declared Rogers. "You see, there's no need of my going; but I'll go, all right. It will be a happy family reunion. I couldn't afford to miss it."

"Yes, Van Kloep is a Dutch name," asserted Fenway, going to a lower shelf of one of the bookcases where he religiously kept the back volumes of that useful directory of society, and selecting one of them.

"Now we've gone into a great deal of ancient history this evening," he proceeded, as he returned to his chair and ran over the leaves, "but we have not yet arrived at the precise point we are anxious to reach—did the Murchisons elope with Mrs. Martin-Chester's diamonds last evening or did somebody else? If we had only Mr. Lionel Murchison to consider in the matter, I should say, as I have already said, 'no.' Does the presence of Mrs. Lionel Murchison make it any more likely? Ah!" he exclaimed, in a satisfied tone, as he closed the "Social Register" and placed it on the table. "Who can tell?"

There was a sudden ring at the bell. Fenway looked at his watch. "Rather late for visitors," he remarked.

"Perhaps that's the answer to your question," suggested Rogers. "It would give it quite the proper dramatic effect."

A woman's voice was heard expostulating with Garvin in the hallway. In a moment, our faithful servitor opened the door of the study wide enough to admit his head, and announced:

"Mrs. Murchison wants to know would you see her on a matter of the utmost importance?"

"Certainly," assented Fenway, placing the glasses, the siphon, and the half-empty bottle upon the tray, and

handing it to Rogers, with a silent motion toward the dining-room.

Rogers elevated his left eyebrow, as a sign of comprehension, and betook himself, with his burden, behind the portières that separated the two rooms, as Fenway continued in the same even tone to Garvin:

"Please ask the lady to come in."

CHAPTER XIII.

It was a beautiful and exquisitely appointed woman who paused upon the threshold. Her face, one of rare intelligence and rendered more than ordinarily interesting by its intense pallor, was effectively set off by its background of abundant red-gold hair, crowned with a wide-brimmed black picture hat. Slightly above average height, her figure was of the type best described by the French as *fausse maigre*, giving an impression of slenderness that the full, falling curves of bust and shoulders and hips instantly contradicted. Her expression was one of outward calm, that only her quickened breathing, manifested in the almost throbbing movement of bosom, betrayed was the result of strong will resolutely holding in restraint an almost overpowering emotion.

"I hoped that I might be able to see you in private," she said, in a rich contralto voice of great sweetness, that gave no hint of her inward agitation.

Fenway and I had both risen, and I was standing slightly to one side of the doorway.

"You do," said Fenway, in that reassuring, confidence-inspiring voice that he knew so well how to assume. "I have no secrets from Mr. Walford, without whose generous assistance I should never have been able to acquire the slight reputation to which doubtless I owe the honor of this visit. Pray come in, and rest assured that we are both ready to serve you in any way that may be in our power."

Without further sign of hesitation, Mrs. Murchison entered the room and quietly took the chair that Fenway had

placed for her, so that the light from the lamp on the table threw its soft beams upon her features. She seemed, by a slight smile, to recognize this gentle artifice of her host's, but made no move to alter her position.

"How was your husband when you left him?" Fenway inquired, not waiting for his visitor to open the conversation.

The appropriateness of the question was indicated by the startled look that came into Mrs. Murchison's eyes, only to be instantly repressed.

"He was resting quietly," she answered, "but under the influence of a strong opiate. I have not dared to leave him all day. He would, I fear, have taken some desperate step that only I should have had to regret. That must be my apology for this untimely visit. I—we need your help. I do not exaggerate when I say it is in a matter of life or death."

"You were at the Martin-Chesters' dance last evening?" said Fenway, in a tone of a half-interrogation.

"Yes; and the disappearance of the diamond tiara came upon us both with a terrible shock. You may, in your professional capacity, have some knowledge of the unfortunate chain of coincidences that seemed to implicate Mr. Murchison in some association with the theft of the Belding—and other—jewels two years ago—"

"I know; proceed," interjected Fenway.

"He went abroad, where we were married," continued Mrs. Murchison. "He felt that it was impossible for him to stay longer in this country. It was with difficulty that I induced him to return, although not the slightest evidence had ever been brought forward to show that he had anything more to do with the four robberies than the mischance of being present on each occasion. Yet to a man so sensitive, whose life had been always without blemish, the thought that any one might regard him with suspicion was unbearable. It was only when I urged that his further absence might be taken as a sign of cowardice, as a virtual confirmation of ill-

natured gossip, that he decided to return. We have only just arrived, and the entertainment at Ardsley was our first appearance among our—or, rather, his—old friends. You can, perhaps, understand something of our feelings when it was discovered that Mrs. Martin-Chester's diamond ornament had mysteriously disappeared during the evening under circumstances almost identical with those that had marked the loss of similar articles during Mr. Murchison's last winter in New York, tending to revive all the painful associations and innuendoes of that season.

"The effect upon Lionel — Mr. Murchison—has been worse than even I could have expected, had I ever anticipated so awful a contretemps. He preserved his self-command splendidly until we left the house; but by the time we had returned to the hotel where we are stopping, he was almost in a state of collapse. To-day he has been nearly out of his mind. I have not thought it safe to leave him alone. Unless the tiara can be found or the thief arrested, I—I really fear for his reason, even for his life; for I do not know what rash thing he may be impelled to do. It is, I need not tell you, scarcely less hard for me, who know better than any one else all that he has gone through these last two years and a half.

"Mr. Fenway, those jewels *must* be found, *must* be, I tell you."

Mrs. Murchison did not raise her voice or give other evidence of the intense excitement under which she was, I realized, laboring. Her tones only expressed an indomitable resolution, a determination to conquer fate, despite every obstacle.

"You, I know," she went on, "are of all men the most capable to help me—us. If it is a matter of expense"—Fenway slightly shook his head—"or expenses," she corrected herself, "they are not to be considered. Everything that we own is as nothing to Lionel's good name. It must and shall be preserved," she added, in unconscious quotation. "I have to ask you, to beg you—to command you, if it were in my power to do so—to take up this case and to unravel

its mysteries. Nothing must prevent the recovery of those diamonds, even if it becomes necessary to duplicate them and to find the replica. My husband's reputation must be vindicated at all costs, and at the earliest possible moment. You will forgive me—will you not?—for my insistence, for which I offer no justification other than the horrible predicament in which this unhappy affair has placed us. Can you, will you, help us?"

Fenway's face assumed that smile that suggested so much but revealed so little, as he asked:

"Have you heard from or had any communication with the Martin-Chesters since leaving their house last night?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Fenway. Lionel has not been in any mood to apply to them, and I have had all I could do to look after him. It was not until well into the evening that he would consent to see a physician. It was a case for heroic measures. Doctor Bainbridge, however, assures me that my husband will not wake up before noon to-morrow. We have heard nothing from Ardsley. The—the tiara has not been found already?"

Fenway shook his head. "Not yet, unfortunately, my dear madam. But I ought to tell you that I have already been engaged by Mr. Martin-Chester to investigate the matter, and that I have consented to do so. Be assured that I shall give it my best, my most interested, attention. You will be quick to see, however, that, under the circumstances, it will be impossible for me to accept a retainer from you."

Mrs. Murchison's disappointment was evident only in her face—the slight suggestion of color which it had taken on during her earnest exhortation giving way to the paleness it had worn on her entrance—and in her hands, manifested in their increased tension as they lay in her lap.

"I am very glad, however," Fenway continued, "that you have come to me, and just at this moment; for I believe that it lies within your power to help me greatly, and so also to help your hus-

band, if you will be perfectly frank with me."

"I will, I will," she said earnestly, but also in a whisper.

"And I will be equally frank with you," returned Fenway. "I have already, scarcely five minutes ago, been in consultation with the person who, I thought, would be able to throw the most light on the subject. As he is still here, and as his assistance will be extremely valuable, perhaps indispensable, I will invite him into our consultation. Walford," he said, addressing me, "will you kindly ask Mr. Rogers to join us?"

Had it been possible for Mrs. Murchison to grow paler than she was already, I should have said that her face took on an added degree of whiteness as I rose to comply with Fenway's request. There was a slight fluttering of the eyelids, which made me half-pause, lest she should be about to faint. But with wonderful self-command, the beautiful woman's spirit rose superior to her physical weakness, and with only a single deep inspiration, she settled herself to face the unexpected ordeal before her.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Mrs. Murchison," Fenway began, as Rogers and I came from the dining-room, "this is my friend Mr. Rogers, who—"

"Barbara," Rogers broke in. A tinge of reproof was in his voice.

"Oh, then you know each other already?" said Fenway, looking at Mrs. Murchison. Her face had crimsoned at Rogers' greeting, and her eyes swam in tears that would not be kept back. She rose to her feet, drawing around her shoulders the long wrap that she had thrown from them when she sat down, and bowed to Rogers.

"Yes," she said, "and he was kinder to me than I was to him. I see," she added, turning to Fenway, "that you cannot help me, after all. I am sorry to have troubled you. Good-by."

"Will you not wait a few minutes?" said Fenway. "Perhaps you underrate

both my willingness and my ability. I beg that you will be seated again. Let me reassure you by telling you that I have not the least suspicion that either you or your husband had anything whatever to do with the loss of Mrs. Martin-Chester's diamonds. Even assuming that you both were concerned in the taking of the so-called 'Belding jewels'—Mrs. Murchison gave him a penetrating glance at this expression—"you would never have celebrated your return to New York by so socially suicidal a performance—one where there was so little to gain and so much—your very liberty—to lose. I cannot say at this moment who did take the tiara; but I am convinced that it was neither you nor Mr. Murchison. Are you still incredulous? Do you suspect a trap? Then I must explain still further; but it will take a little time. Let us all sit down, while I tell you."

"I am only one against three—one woman against three men," said Mrs. Murchison; "but I accept your assurance of good-will. I shall hear what you have to say."

"That is well," said Fenway, as we all resumed our seats, "and in the end you will not regret it. We have made an agreement to-night to meet one another on terms of absolute frankness—and you must not be disturbed at whatever I may say to you. In return, however, I shall expect similar candor from you, and the rest of us will try not to be surprised at anything you may reveal to us.

"In the first place, you need be neither surprised nor alarmed when I tell you that Mr. Walford and I have heard this evening from Mr. Rogers the full account of all his efforts to associate your husband with the four jewel robberies to which you have already alluded, of his acquaintance with you, of your actions on the night of the Belding robbery—and, afterward, so far as he has knowledge of them—and that Mr. Walford has read aloud to us a copy of the alleged 'confession' by means of which you and Mr. Murchison induced Mr. Rogers to withdraw from the case and from the pursuit of his calling. Let

me say here that, from what I know of the circumstances, I consider you to be a very brave woman; but, like many brave persons, at times a very imprudent one; and, like most imprudent persons whose imprudence is the result of impulse, on occasion a very inconsiderate one.

"You will not, I think, be surprised when I tell you that I thoroughly believe everything that Mr. Rogers has told me, and that I know and am prepared to prove, if it were necessary, that you and Mr. Murchison together planned and carried out the affair at the Beldings', and that it was the first time that he had ever worked with an assistant or confederate. I cannot prove, but I believe that it was the first time that you ever engaged in such an enterprise, and I am confident that you both solemnly resolved and determined that it should be the last time for both of you.

"So far as those past cases are concerned, I understand that Mr. Rogers has withdrawn from them, and I have not been called into them. There might be some éclat to be gained from suddenly reviving them, and announcing my discovery of the guilty persons; but I have had for two years all the information—save on one point, which could readily have been ascertained—that I have heard to-night, and I have not moved in the matter. The only thing that would cause me to act would be the belief that you and your husband were concerned in last evening's affair. You will see, accordingly, how all our interests focus to the selfsame point—that of learning who took the Martin-Chester diamonds. I think I may, then, safely count upon your hearty cooperation."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Murchison. "But what can I do? What can I tell you? What do you want to know?"

"I want," said Fenway, with great seriousness, "some information from you which will necessarily involve you in an admission that Lionel Murchison stole Mrs. Vander Poel's pearl necklace, Mrs. Whiting's diamond stomacher, and Miss Laura Anstruther's

Bonaparte bracelet, and that you and he together contrived and carried out the rape of the jewels that Mrs. Belding wore on the night of her ball two years ago."

Mrs. Murchison's hands found each other in a firm clasp in her lap, and she gazed straight before her, beyond us, out into nowhere. The silence was growing painful. At last, with a short sigh that was half a choke, she said:

"You mean that, if I am to give you any help in finding out who took Mrs. Martin-Chester's tiara, the answer to the question which you will ask me, and which I must answer if I am to expect help from you, will amount to a confession of previous guilt?"

"You have stated the case correctly," replied Fenway.

"And if I do not answer?"

"You will not have been frank with me, as you promised. Your refusal will tend to throw suspicion on your present motives and your recent actions. I shall then deem it my duty to reconsider my opinions already formed as to your and your husband's possible complicity in the Ardsley matter, to place you both under surveillance, to investigate your history during the last two years, to learn if you have disposed of any valuable jewels in that period, and to act in accordance with whatever may be the results of my inquiries."

"Bring up all that past-and-gone horror?"

Fenway inclined his head.

Again Mrs. Murchison gazed away into the distance; but whether she was looking into the past or into the future, who could tell? Her voice was very low when at last she spoke.

"And if I do answer your question, what I say shall never go beyond us four? And all that my answer involves will be, so far as you three are concerned, forever buried? Oh, can't you see what a responsibility you are casting upon me? I have not only myself to consider, but my husband's honor. Do you all give me your solemn promises?"

"I do," said Fenway.

"And so do I," I assented.

She turned to Rogers.
"And you, too?"

The ex-detective rose to his feet. His usually ruddy face was pale. His features worked convulsively. For an instant he seemed to hesitate. Then, raising his right hand, he declared in his deep voice:

"I promise!" and sat down.

Mrs. Murchison gave a sigh of relief. Then:

"Before you ask your question," she spoke, addressing Fenway, "I want first to tell you the exact truth about those matters to which my answer will commit me. There are circumstances which you should know, if I am to admit anything, and which I should rather have you know, both for Lionel's sake and my own."

"I pray you will proceed," said Fenway. "It should be an interesting story."

"It is, at least, a strange one," said Mrs. Murchison.

CHAPTER XV.

"It was nearly ten years ago that I first met Lionel Murchison," Mrs. Murchison began. "I am going to tell you everything as it happened to me and as the matters that I was not personally concerned in came to my knowledge. But, perhaps, first of all, I ought to tell you who I am."

"Why, are you not the daughter of Gansevoort Marcy, who made a runaway match about thirty years ago with Sophia Van Kloep, the only child of Hedwig Van Kloep by her morganatic marriage with—shall we say a 'Certain Great Personage'?" interjected Fenway.

Mrs. Murchison looked at him in marked surprise.

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed. "That is precisely who I am; only I did not know you knew it."

Fenway smiled. "Perhaps the others did not," he admitted.

"I was in England with my father, when Lionel was introduced to me," Mrs. Murchison continued. "We seemed

to have very little money, and we spent most of our time visiting around at people's houses, when we were not living in cheap lodgings in London. My father sometimes referred to a 'secret mission' he was busy about, that would bring him a fortune if he were successful in it; but in the meantime he seemed to have a pretty hard time to get along or to keep up any sort of an appearance. He was always writing to some mysterious person for funds, and usually getting very little. This would make him extremely irritable at the time; but he was too good-natured and merry-hearted to feel depressed for long, and really we managed to enjoy ourselves very much in spite of our poverty and makeshifts.

"Lionel and I grew to be very good friends. He was young and seemed to have plenty of money and to love to spend it in giving other people good times, though I fancy that my father and I were the 'other people' who mostly benefited by his free-handed generosity at that period. We frequently met Lionel at country houses, and it was not long before he told me of his great love for me, and I—well, I loved him, too. Father never seemed to object to our intimacy, and Lionel was always hunting us up when we were in town and taking us off to the theater or for a coaching-trip, or on some such pleasurable excursion. There had been what is called an 'understanding' between Lionel and me for some weeks before he formally told father that he wanted to marry me—and then everything was suddenly changed.

"They both came out of father's study looking very solemn, and we all cried and shook hands, and kissed one another; and Lionel said 'good-by,' and went away. Only, the next day I got a note from him, telling me that he should always love me and wait for me, and if I ever needed him I must send for him and he would come at once, if he were on the other side of the world, and lots of sweet things like that. And father said he was a dear boy, and he wished it could be, only it couldn't, and some day I would know

and understand. And that was all the satisfaction I got, and it wasn't very much, nor nearly enough, I can tell you.

"Affairs went on this way for a year or so, when suddenly father came home one day very jubilant, with his pocket-book full of bank-notes, and told me to 'cheer up,' that everything was coming out all right. We had a grand dinner at a grand restaurant, and went to the opera in a box; and lots of our friends dropped in, and we had a very gay evening. Then, the very next day, father was taken ill with pneumonia, and in a week he was dead.

"Then my mother, who was living in Brussels, came and took me. But she was even poorer than father, and always looked on the dark side of life; and though I loved her and was sorry for her, I felt that I was not a comfort to her, but, rather, a burden. So I took a place as a governess, and saved a little money, and then, because I longed to be more independent and was interested in the work, I came to America and entered the Presbyterian Hospital to study to be a trained nurse. After I was graduated from the hospital, my mother came over and joined me. As I had plenty of nursing engagements, we got along very comfortably together. But my mother was not strong, and the New York winters were too much for her, and she died, too.

"I had always wondered why my mother came to America, and I had imagined that there must be some reason besides her desire to be with me, because, somehow, we had always got along perfectly well apart. After her death, I found a letter from her to me that explained a good deal that had always seemed strange to me in our family life—our poverty, our separation, my father's secret mission, my mother's visit to the United States, and Lionel's mysterious disappearance at my father's word. Dearly as I loved my father, I would have married Lionel had he insisted, in spite of all parental disapproval; because, you see, I knew that my father was always planning for my happiness, and that he would not have remained angry long, when he saw that

I really was happy. The quiet way in which Lionel had given me up was a great disappointment to me. I think I must have inherited a rather romantic and adventurous disposition."

Mrs. Murchison smiled as she added this reflection. And as her smile was very sweet and very infectious, we all three smiled in sympathy and acquiescence.

"I fear that you will think I am spending too much time over my introduction," said Mrs. Murchison, taking up the thread of her discourse again; "but it will all help you to understand better what I am going to tell you now.

"My mother had been dead but a little while when I read one morning in the newspaper that Mr. Lionel Murchison had been injured in an automobile accident and had been taken to the Presbyterian Hospital. I had never heard from him since his little note of farewell, though I had often wondered about him, and always read with interest the frequent mention of his doings in the society columns. I knew that he had never married, and—well, since I had read the letter my mother left me when she died, I had felt very differently toward him, and I rather wanted to know how he felt toward me. Perhaps you can understand."

Mrs. Murchison smiled again; and we three men smiled in unison with her. We felt that we could understand, and rather envied Murchison.

"I was disengaged at the time," she went on, "so I—well, I went up and saw the head nurse, who was an old friend of mine, and I told her just enough to excite her sympathy; and then I saw one of the nurses whom I knew very well, who was on the corridor where Mr. Murchison's room was; and after I had talked with her for a while, she discovered that she needed a vacation, and when I offered to take her place, it was all very easily arranged. Of course, Mr. Murchison was greatly surprised when he saw me, and I was, oh, terribly surprised, and very much embarrassed, and—oh! well, he begged me to stay and nurse him—so I stayed.

"He wasn't very badly hurt; but he did seem to require a great deal of attention, and it was not long before we had some great old talks, and were soon on much the same terms of intimacy on which we had been before we parted that time in London. Yet not on quite the same terms; for though he told me he had been waiting for me all those years and would never marry anybody else, and had wondered and wondered if I were ever going to send for him, he never spoke of marriage, and he seemed to have something on his mind. At last, one day, when he was nearly well, he broke down and told me all." Mrs. Murchison choked back an obvious sob. "And—and now, I suppose—to keep my agreement—I must tell you. He said he could not marry me because he had lost all his money, and—and had been very wicked."

There was a look of appeal in Mrs. Murchison's eyes as she paused and glanced at us. But Fenway's face was expressionless, Rogers showed only interest and eagerness in his, and mine was in the shadow, so she could not see how it looked.

CHAPTER XVI.

"He told me that his fortune had been largely cut into some years before, and that he had tried to build it up again by making new investments and by speculation. He had not been reckless; but, little by little, his resources had dwindled. He had not discriminated closely between capital and income, and then, suddenly, the failure of a manufacturing company in which he was interested and a drop in the stock-market had brought him face to face with the fact that he had only twelve thousand dollars left in the world. It would bring him but a pittance at interest. He had no business experience, and his lack of success as a financier made him distrustful of his abilities. Every plan he tried to make for his future seemed to spell failure at the end.

"He was desperate, though he tried

not to show it, and he determined to keep a good face to the world until the last gasp.

"Then, one night, he went to Caroline Vander Poel's coming-out ball. He danced with her mother—and you all know how she lost her necklace. Lionel hunted for it, with the others; and its disappearance was as much a mystery to him as to everybody else—until he got home. His man was not waiting up for him, fortunately, or, rather, unfortunately; for when Lionel took off his coat and vest, he found the necklace!

"It had evidently become unfastened during the waltz, and had slipped down inside of his vest and had caught in the waistband of his trousers. Although very valuable, it was a simple thing, a mere string of pearls, very light, and he had never noticed it. It was like finding fifteen thousand dollars.

"I can't tell you all that he told me about how he struggled against the temptation to keep the necklace; but in the end he temporized with his conscience by putting the pearls inside the hollow cylinder of an old-fashioned music-box that had belonged to his grandfather, until he could think it over."

"He was still in this uncertain and dangerous frame of mind when he went to meet the German ambassador—at the Leslie Whiting's. Mrs. Whiting stood at the door of the drawing-room receiving with the ambassador's wife. People, after being greeted by them, passed on into the room. When Lionel came in, the baroness was talking to some man, so Lionel paused for a few moments with his hostess, waiting to be presented. Mrs. Whiting carried a big bunch of flowers, such as a débâutante would have, that almost concealed her proudest possession—her diamond stomacher.

"As they stood chatting she dropped her handkerchief. Lionel stooped down to pick it up. As he raised his head, he saw that the catch of the stomacher had become unfastened. The ornament was on the point of dropping off. Half-unconsciously his hand touched it. His impulse, he said, if he thought at all, was to push it back. But the moment

his fingers felt the jewels, they closed around them; and, before he fairly realized what he had done, he had detached the stomacher, under cover of the bouquet, from its insecure perch; and, while he occupied Mrs. Whiting's attention with the return of her handkerchief, he slipped the thing into his pocket.

"It was all done in a moment, absolutely without premeditation. Mrs. Whiting did not discover her loss for nearly three-quarters of an hour; and, in the meantime, Lionel had placed the diamonds, wrapped in his silk muffler, in the inside pocket of his overcoat in the dressing-room. The pearls and the diamonds together had made him forty thousand dollars richer—and a thief.

"He had not meant to be one. His downfall was not the result of calculation, but almost of accident, of weakness, of opportunity, of despair at his loss of fortune. Now he accepted the fact. It seemed to him as if he had been impelled by fate. It was the only form of activity for which he had ever shown any aptitude, in which he had ever achieved any success. He determined, thereupon, to adopt it as his profession.

"Then he began to develop a remarkable shrewdness and forethought. He decided that ten thousand dollars a year would be enough for him to live on. He would sell his yacht, which would bring about eight thousand dollars. That, with the money he had at his banker's, would give him twenty thousand dollars in hand. He determined not to attempt to realize upon any of the jewels until nearly the end of the second year, when he would dispose of them in some far-away place like Australia or South America. By that time it would be safe to do so.

"He decided that he would need fifty thousand dollars besides this twenty to keep him going for five years longer. Three years after he had sold the jewels he would be ready to embark on another campaign of robbery. He could then wait two years more before having to sell the proceeds. He meant to keep on in this manner, and he believed that

by varying his methods and being in no hurry to realize on his plunder, he could escape detection.

"It only remained for him to make one more effort to prove to himself that he was capable of carrying out his plan successfully and to round out the sum of fifty thousand dollars he wanted. He felt that he must prearrange some robbery, and then execute it exactly according to his designs, and he decided to attempt as bold an operation as he would ever be likely to engage in.

"He took the Country Club ball as the occasion, and Laura Anstruther's bracelet as the object. It fitted in with all his requirements. The jewels in it were worth about ten thousand dollars; the taking of it would be a very difficult operation, since she wore it on her arm.

"Another motive was that it would humble her pride, for the bracelet was all she had to be proud of, and she was the only girl of Lionel's acquaintance who had ever been really nasty to him. Of course, all this shows how his determination to be a thief had lowered his personal standards. He felt terribly about it afterward; almost as badly, I think, as about the actual theft.

"The plot that he conceived was so ingenious and daring that it would have commanded admiration, had it been employed for a useful purpose. Lionel was on the committee of arrangements of the club. He placed a little fountain in the conservatory, or palm-room, that would trickle gently unless it was turned on with full force, when it would spurt in every direction.

"He was very polite to Miss Anstruther at the ball, and his attentions seemed to please her, so that she was very agreeable to him, and quite altered in her manner.

"Just before supper he took her into the palm-room to see the fountain. It was not spouting at all, and he turned it 'way on, so that it sprinkled her arm and her dress. He was full of apologies and concera, and wiped her arm with his handkerchief, on which he had emptied a small bottle of cocaine that he had carried ready in his pocket. He

then kept her standing while he wiped off her dress, until her arm about the bracelet had time to become numb, when he dried her arm with a clean handkerchief.

"Then, while she was going into the supper-room with another man, whom she met as they returned to the ballroom, he pressed behind her in the crowd, unclasped the bracelet, cutting the slight gold chain that held the ends together, slipped it from her arm and into his pocket; and then made his way to the office, where he began to look at railway time-tables. He had been thus occupied for some time before the bracelet was missed.

"The risk had been great, but Lionel had decided that this should be his last venture of the sort for five years, and, besides, he never expected to operate in quite that way again. He rather expected, when Mr. Rogers took hold of the case, that he would be closely watched; for he had known that he had been under observation ever since the Vander Poel ball.

"Professionally, if I may use the expression, Lionel had been perfectly satisfied with the result of what was, after all, his first deliberate theft. It convinced him that he had the necessary brains, coolness, and adroitness to carry out successfully a peculiarly daring robbery. So far as he could in any way be associated with the loss of the bracelet he would have been utterly beyond suspicion. That he, nevertheless, was suspected was entirely due to the fact that he had been dancing with Mrs. Vander Poel at the time she lost her necklace. That had been purely an accident. He did not intend to be an accidental thief in the future.

"He endeavored to counteract any unfavorable impression to which his presence at all three of the functions where jewels had been stolen might give rise by occasionally referring to the awkward position in which it placed him, and by complaining of the inactivity of the police in a letter to a newspaper.

"This was the situation when his accident brought us together."

CHAPTER XVII.

"In the renewal of our old associations," Mrs. Murchison continued; "in the revival of his youthful love, Lionel came to see his conduct in its true light. He felt a horror of his weakness and sin that drove him into a confession to me. He told me everything without reserve, and begged me to help him. He said that he knew he had forfeited all claim to my love and respect, and that he could never expect me to care for him any more, nor could he ask me to become the wife of a criminal. His anguish and remorse were pitiful to see. He said that he would rather work as a day-laborer, or starve, if need be, than touch a cent derived from his dishonesty. He declared that he would go to work at once, upon leaving the hospital, at anything he could find to do.

"We women are strange creatures. I don't know how another might have felt in my position; but as for me, I experienced nothing of the repulsion that he seemed to expect. No doubt, if I had in any other way discovered Lionel to be a thief, I might not have ceased to love him, but I should have despised him too much ever to become his wife. But his sorrow was so sincere, and his humiliation so bitter, that it seemed to absolve him from all taint of reproach. I only loved him the more and longed to aid him in his efforts to live down the consequences of his wrongful acts. And then—and then, I had what seemed to me to be an inspiration.

"Yet I hardly dared to broach to Lionel the idea that had sprung into my mind, for fear that it would seem too much like the sort of action that he was so determined to forswear for the future. But, as I thought it over and over, I could not resist the temptation to tell him. In the execution of my plan there seemed to be the only solution of our difficulties, the only promise for our future happiness. And then, it would, it seemed to me, serve, in a way, to bring us together on the same plane. I had little hope that Lionel would ever be able to make a success in business, and—oh, I did not want to give him

up, now that I was sure that he loved me. So, at last, I told him.

"My story went back to before the time we had first met. My mother's father, whom you have referred to as a 'Certain Great Personage,' was greater in rank than in wealth. What income he had was always more than spent in keeping up the state that he deemed it appropriate to his dignity to maintain. His marriage, of course, was never officially recognized, so that, on his death, there was no pension forthcoming for my grandmother, and the estate that he had given her was so overladen with mortgages that she was compelled to let it go. All that remained to her, besides her own small fortune, were the jewels that her royal husband had given to her."

"Oh, yes; the 'Markheim jewels,'" remarked Fenway casually.

"Exactly," Mrs. Murchison continued. "You have heard of them, then?"

"Well, I never did," said Rogers.

"They were famous enough in Europe in the last century," explained Fenway, "and there was a great to-do when it was learned that they had been diverted from the reigning family to an unacknowledged branch. Determined efforts were made to get possession of them, even by force, but they all failed."

"Yes," added Mrs. Murchison. "It was conclusively proved that the jewels were the personal property of my grandfather, and were his to dispose of as he willed; but my grandmother was compelled to move for safety into Belgium, and she used up nearly all her other resources in defending her right to them. Nothing, however, would induce her to part with any of the jewels. She kept them intact, preserving them for the dowry of her daughter, my mother. She always cherished the hope that, in default of a direct heir, my mother's legitimacy would be recognized. So she retained the jewels as a sort of *cachet*, perhaps as a possible attraction to some impecunious grand duke to make my mother his wife, and to engage his family influence to push her claims. It was a terrible blow to

my grandmother, I know, when her daughter ran away and married my father. He was the dearest thing that ever lived, but probably one of the least practical. He had a sufficient fortune at the time to support my mother in much better style than that to which she had ever been accustomed, for her father had died while she was still a baby. But that counted as nothing with my grandmother, who saw all her ambitions crumble into dust at the marriage of her child, the possible inheritor of a throne, to 'a crazy American,' as she called my father.

"Though the jewels did not come to my mother as her dowry, they fell to her by inheritance on my grandmother's death; and with them, strangely enough, the same ambitions for me that her mother had nourished for her. The hope was, I need not say, more than vain; yet she found in my father her most enthusiastic supporter. I fancy, if the truth were known, he was her only supporter in her fantastic projects. Thenceforward, their lives were devoted to pushing my 'claims,' if you will believe it, to public acknowledgment.

"There was only one point on which they differed, and that was one of means; but it led to a separation between them, although I am sure that they never ceased to love each other. Indeed, my mother's grief, at the death of my father, was sufficient testimony on that score; and I never heard my father refer to her except in the most tender and affectionate terms.

"It seems that before long my father spent all his patrimony in his well-meant but futile efforts to have me accepted as a royal princess. Poor daddy! It would have been humorous, if it had not been so pathetic. He became, in fact, entirely obsessed with the idea, although he never allowed me to have the least suspicion of his plans. And while she lived, my mother was equally reticent. It was only after her death that, in the long document she left to me, she revealed the facts.

"It appears that when my father's means were exhausted he had wished my mother to sell some of the jewels,

in order to enable him to proceed with his endeavors. But to this my mother would not give her consent. To her the possession of the royal jewels seemed to be the essential factor in establishing my pretensions, and she would not allow the collection to be impaired by so much as an earring. For some time my father yielded to her wishes; indeed, I think he had to; and we lived very simply in Belgium and France.

"Then my father conceived a complicated plan that I myself do not very well understand, as he never took me into his confidence, and my mother alludes to it only in general terms in her letter. I am afraid it was a very hare-brained and impractical scheme at the best.

"My father had, so far as I can make out, discovered the impecunious dukelet who was to prove the fairy prince of my romance. The fairy prince, however, in this instance, was an exceedingly businesslike, not to say sordid, individual. The bargain he made with my father was very much to his own advantage, and apparently committed him to nothing. His impecuniosity was due to his having sunk his entire fortune in some queer African colonization scheme that had been overshadowed and swamped by the greater and more comprehensive plans of King Leopold.

"The Belgian monarch had no need of the duke or of his colonization company, and the latter's only hope lay in interesting an English syndicate in his projects, and in turning over to it his interests at the best price he could get. There were reasons why he could not or would not appear personally in the negotiations, and it was here that my father saw his great opportunity.

"This exceedingly commercial fairy prince agreed that, if daddy could induce the British capitalists to take over his concessions at a certain figure, he would reimburse my father for all his expenses, give him a handsome bonus besides, and, in addition, would personally and politically interest himself in forwarding my parents' ambitions in my

behalf. In case he were successful in securing my official recognition, he would marry me, my royal rank, and the Markheim jewels.

"This was just the sort of entangling diplomatic alliance to appeal to poor daddy; only, unfortunately, he was not in a financial position to engage in it. At last, however, my fairy prince undertook to find the money for my father's expenses if daddy would deposit with him the jewels that were to form my dowry as security, in case the British capitalists should fail to come to time.

"Although it is clear that my mother must have given her consent to this temporary alienation of the jewels, it is evident also that she could hardly, at the time, have fully understood all the conditions of the transaction; for it was the cause of a break between her and my father that was never healed. She consented, nevertheless, to his taking me to London with him, for my interests were as dear to her as they were to him, and they both believed that the social experience I would gain in England would be to my advantage.

"In spite of the value of the security he had given, my father had the utmost difficulty in getting from his very distantly prospective son-in-law the money that he felt was necessary for carrying out his part of the bargain. Apparently, however, it was enough; for in the end—I firmly believe to the surprise of everybody who was in the secret—he succeeded in his undertaking.

"It was at this moment of his triumph that he unfortunately died, and I went back to my mother. But when she asked for the return of the jewels, she was informed that they had been hypothecated to a wealthy American, in order to comply with my father's 'inordinate and excessive' demands for money.

"Fortunately, in concluding his transfer of the African company to the English syndicate my father had engaged the services of an honorable firm of solicitors, who carefully protected his interests, and eventually paid over to my mother a handsome sum as his par-

ticipation in the profits. So, when it seemed impossible to force the royal promoter to live up to his part of the contract, my mother undertook to deal directly with the American holder of the jewels.

"He, however, barricaded himself behind all sorts of legal technicalities, and refused to relinquish the property except to the person from whom he had received it. He was obliging enough to take the money which my mother sent him, and to give her a receipt for it with an understanding to turn the jewels over to her when she should present a duly attested order from his exalted client.

"This cheerful individual, on his part, professed to be highly indignant at what he called my mother's 'unwarranted interference' in the affair. He declared that she had taken the matter entirely out of his hands and declined to grant her request.

"Of course, there was redress in law to be had. But, for one thing, my mother shrank from the necessary publicity, her means were at the lowest ebb, not to speak of the difficulty she knew she would encounter in attempting to enforce her claims against a personage to whose rank was now added the prestige of the wealth which he had gained through my father's advantageous management of his affairs. She saw in the whole transaction a plot to secure the jewels and to restore them—for a consideration—to the family of my grandfather.

"My mother, accordingly, resolved to exhaust every possible expedient to regain possession of the jewels through her personal efforts before having recourse to the doubtful and expensive machinery of the courts.

"It was then that she came to America to urge her claim with the obdurate holder of the jewels whom she believed to be concerned in the conspiracy. She had several interviews with him; but he steadfastly adhered to his original proposition. He even offered to refund the money which she had paid him; but he reminded her that, in such an event, he could legally lay

claim to the jewels, since no effort had ever been made to redeem them by the mortgagor. This was, of course, merely a shrewd move to hamper my mother financially—to keep control of both the jewels and her money.

"Matters were at such an *impasse* when my mother passed away; and then, for the first time, in the long message she left for me, I learned of all the wild dreams that she and my father had indulged in about me, and of the existence and present disposition of my dowry.

"I also thought I understood for the first time the puzzling conduct of Lionel Murchison when he parted from me in London. It was clear to me that my father had confided to him something of his plans and ambitions for me, and that they had lost nothing of their glamour and grandeur in his recital."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"In coming into my strange inheritance," said Mrs. Murchison, "I did not find myself endowed with the same groundless hopes that had inspired my parents. I had no desire to be a princess and to marry an effete, or even an efficient, monarch of some inconspicuous European principality. There had never been but one prince for me, and he was a simple American like myself—for I had always considered my father's nationality as my own. But I had at least fallen heir to an irresistible determination to recover the Markheim jewels, and I had lain awake many nights trying to devise some method of securing them.

"No feasible way had opened up for me to do so, however, by the time that the accident to Lionel, and my innocent subterfuge, brought us together again in the Presbyterian Hospital. I had often walked past the house of the man who had the jewels in his possession, but I had never personally approached him. After his treatment of my mother it seemed useless to do so.

"Shocked as I was at the confession of Lionel's guilt, there crept into my mind, even while he was telling

me the story of his temptation and fall, a curious, perhaps a perverted, but nevertheless an insistent, conviction that there had been in his experience the working out of some grotesque providence. For I had long since given up all hope of getting my legacy except by force or intrigue.

"As Lionel disclosed his almost preternatural faculty for just this sort of enterprise, I could not divest myself of the impression, which rose superior to all other considerations, that in him was revealed the instrument for recovering my lost fortune.

"As I told him this tale and led up to the climax in which he was to figure he listened with eager attention; and when I had finished and paused, waiting on his word, with an awful feeling of oppression in my heart that seemed to remove me a thousand miles away from him, he clasped my hand and said:

"'It is the finger of fate, for it points the way, at the same time, to my punishment and to my reward. Nothing,' he went on, 'could be more abhorrent to me at this moment than to engage in such a business, however justifiable it may appear—and is. I shall not attempt to conceal from you the suffering or the danger that it will involve. But I will, I cannot tell you how gladly, endure the suffering and incur the risk if, by so doing, I can atone to you in the slightest degree for the disappointment and distress I have caused you to feel on my account.'

"He said a good deal more than that, but it is not necessary to repeat it; and when I fully understood all that the undertaking implied I could have bitten out my tongue for giving voice to the suggestion.

"I begged and begged Lionel to forget, at any rate to pay no heed to, what I said. But it was too late. The idea had taken possession of him, and nothing would break his resolution to make it a reality.

"'It is the finger of fate,' he repeated, as he took a large, square envelope from the table and bade me read what it contained.

"You know," Mrs. Murchison said, looking at Fenway, "what it contained."

"Well, I can guess that much myself," Rogers broke in. "It was the invitation to the Belding ball. You've bored a big enough hole through the millstone to let that much light in."

"Perhaps I have," Mrs. Murchison replied, "but from two expressions that Mr. Fenway made use of this evening, in referring to the gems worn by Mrs. Belding, I imagine that he already knew that they were the Markheim jewels, and that Mr. Belding must, accordingly, be the 'wealthy American' to whom I had referred."

"I had my suspicions," Fenway admitted. "I knew that there was some mystery about the origin of the Belding jewels, and I had read, in the rather spicy 'Memoirs' of Sir Garson Maxwell, an account of the excitement aroused by the presentation of the Markheim jewels to Mrs. Murchison's grandmother. I did not, however, associate the two until you"—he turned to Rogers—"mentioned the name Van Kloep as having been used by Mrs. Murchison while in Europe.

"You will remember," he added, "that I said I should probably learn something of significance in your retelling of the story of your adventures. You omitted a few unessential details, but you brought in, what you forgot in your first recital of the circumstances, the name Van Kloep. You gave me, the first time, only the substance, not the exact words, of the letter. Possibly you have had occasion to refresh your memory of those events recently. You had shown me on that occasion, however, a photograph of your friend, Barbara Marcy, a snap shot, taken by your little boy. There was something familiar to me in her face, but I could not place the resemblance until that name Van Kloep suddenly established the mnemonic connection. That suggested first the Markheim jewels, as I have said, and also recalled to my mind the Bonnat portrait of Mrs. Murchison's grandmother, reproduced in the Maxwell 'Memoirs.'

"I have not the photograph with which to compare it," said Fenway, opening the book that he had taken from its shelf while Rogers had been telling of the letter sent to him by Mrs. Murchison from Amsterdam; "but I have what is better—the lady herself. You can see how strong is the likeness," he added, passing to Rogers and me the volume opened at the portrait.

It might, indeed, have been mistaken for a picture of the woman who sat before us.

"Sir Garson," Fenway went on, "in describing Madame Van Kloep, alludes to her well-proportioned figure and her golden-red hair. Your friend Barbara, if I recollect, was a rather slender young woman with blond hair; but when you saw her in London, you found that her hair had changed its color and that her figure had grown stouter. She explained, in her 'confession,' that these alterations had been produced by artifice and as a manner of disguise. But as I looked at this portrait and glanced at the author's words, it occurred to me that instead of being assumed as a disguise, this change of appearance might more likely have been adopted as a means of accentuating a resemblance.

"Every jeweler of any importance in Europe had heard of the Markheim jewels and knew that they had been given to Madame Van Kloep. Here was Mademoiselle Van Kloep engaged in selling jewels. Had any question arisen as to her right to dispose of the gems it would be the easiest possible thing to identify them, by the many descriptions that had been written of them, as some of those that had been owned by the original Madame Van Kloep, to whom the vendor, bearing the same name, bore also the unmistakable family resemblance in form, feature, and coloring. So I judged that the Belding jewels were, in all probability, none other than the Markheim jewels. The current volume of the 'Social Register' disclosed the interesting fact that Mr. Murchison had married a lady named Van Kloep who might possibly

have been known in this country as Barbara Marcy.

"This set the chords of memory vibrating again; and by reference to the volume for 1890 I read among the 'M's' the following entry: 'Marcy, Gansevoort'; then, in parentheses, the maiden name of his wife, 'Sophia Van Kloep'; then came the letter 'U,' showing that Mr. Marcy had kept up his membership in the Union Club, and, at the end of the line, stood the abbreviation 'Abd.' for 'Abroad.' That was enough to establish the connection between the separately throbbing brain ganglia, and to supply the missing links in the chain of events.

"I notice that Mrs. Murchison retained the name of Van Kloep when she was married, and also her auburn locks. That causes me to infer that all of the Markheim-Belding jewels have not yet been sold. While not an expert in such matters, my conviction is that time and nature have conspired to render artifice unnecessary in any other particulars."

Mrs. Murchison colored slightly at this appreciative reference to her graceful figure.

"Perhaps a desire to avoid recognition as 'Miss Watson' may have had something to do with it," she suggested then. "Is it worth while for me to go on?" she asked, appealing to Fenway. "You seem to know everything."

"I am entirely dependent upon my senses for information," Fenway explained, with a slight smile, "and hearing is one of my most useful sources of illumination. I beg that you will proceed."

CHAPTER XIX.

"When I saw that invitation," Mrs. Murchison obediently continued, "and when Lionel read me the society note in the *Herald* which stated that Mrs. Belding would undoubtedly wear her magnificent jewels on the occasion, I simply had to take his view of the matter. It seemed, indeed, as if the finger of fate was pointing the way.

"But I would not give my consent to his doing anything unless he allowed

me to have an equal share in the attempt. I felt that in case of any failure I ought to appear as the principal in the affair. I believed that my cause was so just that, if I were ever obliged to tell my story in court, it would not go hard with me at the hands of an American jury.

"Lionel said he would give his whole mind to the matter, and at last I left him to think out his plans.

"Everything seemed to conspire to help us. For instance, it appeared that Lionel was a great crony of the man who had designed the decorations for the Belding mansion on Riverside Drive. He had not only seen all the plans, but he had been all over the house and knew the use to which every room was to be put.

"And then he confided to me that he had a personal incentive to get the jewels away from the Beldings that I had never dreamed of. It seems that after our parting in London, when things were looking very dark for my father, Lionel had himself advanced the large sum that had been necessary to secure the success of the African deal. It was a private matter between the two men, and had never come out in the settlement of father's affairs. It was Lionel's attempt to repair this break in his patrimony that had led him into changing his investments and into the speculations that had resulted in his losing almost all the rest of his inheritance, and so had paved the way for his descent into crime.

"Of course, Lionel could only sketch the outlines of the venture at first. The most difficult thing was to get me into the Belding house as an assistant to the detective. Several ideas occurred to him, but none so good as opened up through my being able to secure a room in Mrs. Rogers' apartment. I had found out where he lived, and going to the house on the plea of looking at a flat, I learned from the janitor that Mrs. Rogers had just advertised for a lodger. I at once hired the room, and then Lionel completed his scheme in detail, and we parted, not to meet again until the night of the ball.

"There" was still a doubt if Mr. Rogers would ask me to help him, but I fixed that by telling him of an imaginary time when I had been asked to watch the wedding presents in a house where I had been nursing, and had prevented a 'poor relation' of the family from taking a valuable sunburst."

"You didn't mention that in your story, Rogers," interjected Fenway.

"A very good reason why," said Rogers. "I had forgotten all about it. I don't remember it now."

"Well, it had the desired effect, apparently," was Fenway's comment.

"If it had not," Mrs. Murchison continued, "Lionel would have got me into the house on some other pretext, I have no doubt. He seemed to rise equal to any emergency. But there were very few emergencies. Everything seemed to fit in with his plans.

"After he left the hospital I reported to him every day by telephone, calling him up at his club. Even in the matter of my name, Mr. Rogers' consideration for me helped me out of a heedless blunder, of my own making, that came about through my acting without first consulting Lionel. In applying for the vacant room in Mr. Rogers' flat, which I did upon the impulse of the moment, it had not occurred to me to give an assumed name. If Mr. Rogers had spoken of me to Mr. Belding as Miss Marcy it would surely have awokened his suspicions at the time. Mr. Rogers' discreet thoughtfulness, however, saved us from that preliminary mishapce.

"At the house I was able to carry out Lionel's instructions to the letter, and his plans worked without a hitch. When I fired the shots on the back stairs, and the men with whom Lionel had been smoking and the attendant in the men's dressing-room rushed to see what had happened, he himself went back into the room. It was Mr. Belding's bedroom, and communicated through a bathroom with the nursery. Lionel, in this way, was able to pass quickly, and without fear of observation, to Mrs. Belding. A few deft movements of his hands sufficed to de-

tach the gems from the unconscious woman.

"Placing them in a cloth bag which I had made and sent him for the purpose, he stepped into Delia's room, put the bag into my open suit-case, which he closed and locked with a duplicate key. He returned to the men's dressing-room through the bathroom, and was down-stairs and at the front door with sufficient margin of time to spare to allow him to begin his address to the guests before Mr. Rogers returned to the nursery with Mr. Belding and Franky.

"In what light Mr. Belding and his exalted fellow-conspirators regarded the taking of the jewels, of course I do not know—whether they thought it an ordinary robbery or discerned in it a clever move in the game that they themselves were playing. That this latter was their view, and that they were ready to admit themselves checkmated, is a natural conclusion from their lack of activity in cooperating with the police.

"I have little doubt that they pursued independent inquiries far enough to satisfy themselves that the jewels had found their way back to their rightful owner. Starting with Barbara Marcy, as they would have done, it would not have been difficult for them to trace my connection with the affair; and then the desire to avoid the scandal, which publicity would entail, would account for their not communicating their discovery to the detective bureau.

"They would, in that case, in all probability, have suspected Mr. Rogers of complicity in the counterplot, and so have believed themselves doubly blocked. In fact, what hurt me most was the necessity of appearing to involve Mr. Rogers in the robbery. We took our precautions simply as precautions, and with the hope that, after following Lionel, perhaps for a short time, Mr. Rogers would satisfy himself that he was on the wrong track and would go back to New York and so report.

"But when he continued to hang on like grim death, and even returned to

the pursuit after Lionel had actually seen him start for America on the steamer; why, after waiting and waiting and waiting for him really to give up the case; Lionel simply *had* to send him home.

"It was impossible for us to see each other, much less to get married, while he was tagging around—and, you know, you did tag around, Mr. Rogers. Why, the only time that I saw Lionel in all those months was while you were on the steamer going to Queenstown. Lionel said then that he believed you would be back, and so he was ready for you.

"At last he arranged for that dreadful interview and my 'confession.' It was almost more than I could bear, because"—she now turned to Fenway—"Mr. and Mrs. Rogers had both been so very kind to me, and it seemed a horrid way to repay them. It showed me then that to do anything partaking of the nature of a crime, even if one is able to justify one's conduct at the time, may—yes, must—involve consequences that one hideously shrinks from.

"By the way, perhaps I may as well admit now that the ink with which the blanks of the 'confession' were filled in—"

"Was not permanent," Fenway broke in. "We had discovered that fact."

"And I had made no efforts to sell any of the jewels on my trip about Europe," continued Mrs. Murchison. "I bought some, however, and made the acquaintance of many jewelers. Any effort to follow up that clue at that time would have come to nothing. Lionel furnished me the money I sent to Mr. Rogers.

"The actual taking of the jewels was nothing like so appalling to me as those awful hours in the hotel, listening to Lionel and Mr. Rogers. I had hated to give Franky Belding the sleeping-drops, but that I did, because I knew they were harmless, and it would have been a great shock to him if he had been awakened by all the excitement of that night. About Mrs. Belding I did not care. I could, I think, have chloroformed her, if necessary, without a

quiver. A trained nurse gets accustomed to such things.

"But to be a witness to the mental torture of so good a friend as Mr. Rogers was as painful to me, I firmly believe, as it was to him. I cannot ask him to forgive me, because I acted with my eyes open, and—well, I suppose I should act in the same way under the same circumstances again; but that did not make it any easier to bear at that time, nor would it at another.

"To be sure, Lionel was ready with a reason and a palliative."

She paused and looked a moment at Rogers, who sat glum and unresponsive, and then she turned again to Fenway.

"You told me to be frank," she said.

"This is an experience-meeting," he replied. "Tell not only the truth, and nothing but the truth, but the whole truth."

"Well," she began, blushing a little, "Lionel said that Mr. Rogers had doubtless wrecked his career as a detective, anyhow. And, besides, he was too good a man for the force; and, if he had different work, he would be happier and more successful. So Lionel arranged that, except for the hurt to Mr. Rogers' feelings, he should not suffer. When Mr. Rogers first pretended to go back, Lionel wrote to Ronald Cartwright, the president of the Opdyke Realty Company, who had been his chum in college—and who was still his dear friend, though they seldom saw each other—and explained how he had struck up a friendship with Mr. Rogers and had come to have a very high opinion of him. Lionel said that Mr. Rogers had become convinced at last of his innocence, and would return to America either at once, or after a short vacation on the Continent.

"He added that he believed Mr. Rogers intended to resign from the police force, and he urged Mr. Cartwright to offer the detective the appointment of superintendent of their new building, then nearly completed."

"He did, didn't he, Rogers?" asked Fenway.

"It was Mr. Cartwright who hired

me, all right," Rogers admitted. "I didn't know on whose recommendation."

"And then, as you know, Lionel fixed it so that the money sent Mr. Rogers from Amsterdam should amount to the two thousand dollars he had promised in case the thief was discovered. Because, really, Mr. Rogers had discovered the thief, and it seemed only fair that he should receive the reward. I hope that whenever Mr. Rogers has occasion to think hardly of us, as he must, and justly, he will at least take these acts of Lionel's into consideration."

Rogers gave no sign, although Mrs. Murchison looked at him very wistfully and, I thought, very winsomely.

CHAPTER XX.

"Then there was another very important reason," said Mrs. Murchison, "why it was necessary to get Mr. Rogers back to America and into some other employment. Lionel still had to arrange about returning the things that he had been tempted to take before he met me in the hospital."

"Oh, he returned them, did he?" ejaculated Rogers, suddenly appearing to take some interest in the proceedings. "Strange I never heard of it."

"That is just what he took pains that you should not do," explained Mrs. Murchison. "But if you had been at the Martin-Chesters' last night you would have had the pleasure of seeing two of them. Mrs. Arnold Frothingham, who was, before her divorce and second marriage, Mrs. Casper Vander Poel, wore her beautiful pearls, and Mrs. Dexter Pennington, formerly Miss Laura Anstruther, was duly adorned with her Bonaparte bracelet. If Mrs. Whiting had been present, no doubt she would have decked herself out with her lovely diamond stomacher, for she has had it for nearly two years.

"It was almost as difficult to restore the stolen articles without exciting suspicion, or, at least, comment, as it had been to take them in the first place. I

must claim the credit both for the idea and for the putting of it into execution.

"I assumed the part of a Sister of Charity, and, concealing the three pieces of jewelry about my person, I sailed to New York, second class, and of course had no trouble in passing the customs inspectors.

"I then, immediately upon landing, called upon each of the three women in turn in the evening. Returning to each the property she had lost, I explained that the jewels came from the wife of the man who had taken them, who had been brought by her to see the error of his ways, and who was anxious to lead a new life. I said that, while he felt that he could impose no condition in restoring the gems, his wife begged that no report of the matter would be made to the police, who had dropped the case, and who might, if the matter were brought to their attention, be moved to renewed activity. The promise was readily given in each instance.

"None of the women had ever seen me, the Sister's uniform is in itself a disguise, and a few delicate lines made with a camel's-hair pencil upon my face had so altered my expression that I did not recognize myself when I looked in the mirror. I was back in Paris in three weeks, with no one the wiser.

"There, Mr. Fenway," Mrs. Murchison concluded, "I have told my story. I have confessed for Lionel and for myself. I have done it in my own way, but it is the true way, and neither the 'third degree' nor the rack itself could make me alter a word of it, because it is exactly as it happened. And now I am ready for the question you were going to ask me."

"Thank you very much," said Fenway. "I am glad to know all this, because it makes me the more ready to help you. And in discovering the real purloiner of Mrs. Martin-Chester's tiara I am sure I shall be helping you in the way that will do both you and Mr. Murchison the most good."

"You certainly will," assented Mrs. Murchison fervently.

"Now," said Fenway, "I want you to continue to be as frank as you have

already been. Is there anybody in the world who, previous to this evening, had any knowledge of you and your husband having been concerned in the Belding robbery?"

"Only one person," said Mrs. Murchison, in some embarrassment.

"And that person is?"

"Why, Mr. Rogers, of course."

"And is there anybody in the whole world who owes you and your husband a grudge—who has had cause to harbor a bitter feeling of resentment against you?"

"Only one man," replied Mrs. Murchison faintly, a worried look coming into her eyes.

"And that man is?" Fenway went on relentlessly.

"Again, Mr. Rogers." Tears were in her voice, which scarcely rose above a whisper.

"Oh, quit that, Fenway!" Rogers broke in fiercely. "Leave the woman alone. Here's the damned bauble!" And at the word he took from his pocket a package tied up in white tissue-paper and threw it upon the table.

"You're a devil!" the ex-detective exclaimed. "How did you guess I had it?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he went on: "It's all very well to talk about my having bettered myself by leaving the force, but it was a cruel blow that Murchison and this lady dealt me, and it rankled. I was disgraced in my own eyes, at least, and my feeling of resentment and my desire for revenge did not diminish as time went on. I was barred by my bargain with them from taking any further steps in regard to the four robberies in which Murchison had previously been concerned, and I could not, of course, appear actively in any proceeding against them in the future. But I never lost hope of being able to get even with them in the end. I had, however, no definite information about them until I heard Mr. Cartwright

mention, the other day, that Mr. and Mrs. Murchison had just returned to America.

"Then I had them followed. I learned that they were going to the dance at Ardsley. I arranged with the caterer, who knew me as a detective, to go there as a waiter.

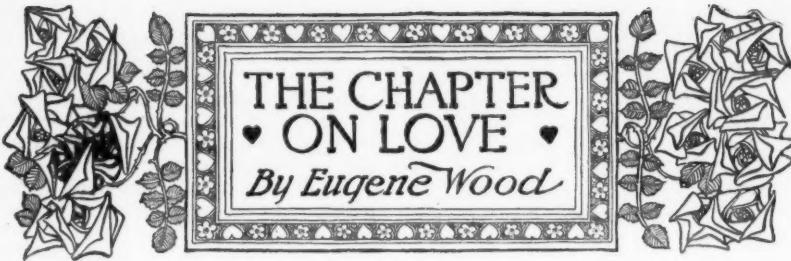
"I made up my mind to watch my opportunity to take some piece of jewelry, knowing that suspicion would instantly fall upon the Murchisons. I hoped that it would lead to their arrest and to the uncovering of their former crimes. I knew that, in any case, it would put an end to their social ambitions.

"Yes, I had the knowledge, and I had the motive, and I had the experience. But I didn't have the nerve. It is one thing to catch a thief; another thing to be one. Then, suddenly, came the report of the loss of the tiara. My first thought, naturally, was that Murchison was actually at his old tricks again, but, as a matter of form, I joined in the search, and to my surprise found the missing article in the conservatory, inside the little cap the lady had worn. I slipped the diamonds into my pocket and announced the discovery of the cap. Everything seemed coming my way.

"When I got your message to call here to-night I brought the thing with me; but I determined to say nothing about it, nor to admit any recent knowledge of the Murchisons and their affairs, until you had unfolded your theories. I meant, when you had got all through, to turn the tiara over to you, so that you could make use of it as you thought best in bringing the Murchisons to justice. But I have heard more than I bargained for. You can use it for any purpose you like—to send me up the river if you want to."

"Oh," said Fenway, "I don't think Mrs. Murchison would approve of that."

But Mrs. Murchison was dumb. She had quietly fainted in her chair.



THE CHAPTER ON LOVE

By Eugene Wood

IN discussing a topic of such vital interest as Love, second not even to the Servant-girl Problem or the Labor Question, it is important that we shall know what we are talking about. I concede that, before all else, it is necessary that a discussion shall be entertaining, and that, as a rule, the most entertaining discussions are those in which nobody knows what he is talking about.

I recall a case in point, a debate to which I once listened, as to whether Christopher Columbus was a Dutchman or an Englishman. It is, perhaps, unnecessary to point out the strenuous ignorance of both contestants, and yet, I assure you, though the question was historical, there was not a dry moment from first to last. It was of a Saturday night, and the hands had just been paid off.

But this is not the back room of McCaffrey's place, and, if we are to talk of Love, let us first understand which love we mean. Owing to the fact that any language, and particularly our English tongue, is an attempted refutation of the saying that you cannot make a silk purse out of—out of unsuitable material, most disquisitions on this subject have been little better than a series of unintentional puns.* I need hardly say that this chapter of The Philosophy of the Absurd is not concerned with the love we have for *bar-le-duc* jelly with *gervais* cheese or *filet mignon à la Trianon*. Nor is it concerned with the love of parents for their offspring,

which is not so utterly dissociated from the foregoing as might appear at first sight, since nowadays only the incredibly rich or the incredibly poor have any families to speak of; the rich, because they can afford them; the poor, because to have a succession of wage-earning, board-paying infants-at-law coming up is a fairly satisfactory insurance against destitution in old age. Either of the two kinds of love I have so far mentioned is, in the last analysis, a matter of food.

The kind of love I mean is not that of brothers and sisters and family connections. Owing to the comparative scarcity of specimens of this, it is difficult to make large generalizations, but I put forth tentatively the theory that it is not really love, but friendship, based upon long and intimate acquaintance. Neither is it this love which subsists between husband and wife, than which there are few sentiments more beautiful and noble. It is true love, I grant you, and in its place well worthy of a careful study. But it is normal and reasonable, and so not absurd or interesting. It is only when husband and wife do *not* love each other that we find ourselves standing in breathless stillness by the air-shaft window, motioning to Katy in the kitchen to stop her singing while we listen to the remarks of the couple on the floor below on the issues of the day.

The love I wish to talk about is the Edwin-Angelina love, the hysterics and ecstasies of two young things, neither of whom has sense enough to break an egg, neither of whom has an opinion worth a finger-snap on any topic under

the shining heavens. It is this love that interests us like a house on fire.

Ralph Waldo Emerson has said: "All the world loves a lover," and we have pocketed the aphorism as if it had been coined in the same mint with: "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line." Nearly all the axioms worth their face were struck off long and long before Emerson went into the business, and if you throw this one of his down hard it will not ring true. All the world does not love the lover. Nobody loves the lover—not even himself—except the one he loves, and sometimes she doesn't.

You have a marriageable daughter, let us say. Do you love your would-be son-in-law just as he stands? At the best, do not you barely put up with him? A shade off the best, do not you watch him like a hawk? I tell you what you know to be the truth; there never was a man yet really worthy of that girl. Am I not right? I thought you would agree with me. You wonder what on earth she sees in him. That is not even admiration. Certainly it is not love. And be sure his parents are not a whit behind you in suspicion. She has played her cards well; she has, indeed. Trust her for that. Oh, she's a good girl, no doubt, but— There's a world of meaning in that broken sentence. They do not love her now. Undoubtedly they will come to love her when she is a wife, but in her present character of lover they do not love her.

Well, then, the lovers' friends—and how do they regard the lover? Our friend is hard enough to put up with at his best, but when he runs away and leaves us just as we reach the nub of what we want to say, merely because his Angelina has appeared and he must go to her; when he bores us with circumstantial narratives of what she said to him and he to her; when he demands of us a true and faithful judgment of her—meaning by that, extravagant and fulsome praise; when he exacts our vivid sympathy with his woful case every time she has a spell of tantrums and tormenting coquetry; when he mopes and pines and wearies us to death

with him, he that was once such cheery company; when the Wednesday evening whist-party has to be given up because he's calling on her every night now; when we miss him at the amateur orchestra where he was once a trusty double-bass that always came in promptly on the down-beat; when he neglects the choir-rehearsal and we have to fall back on "Monk's in C" for Easter, when we had planned to sing the "St. Cecilia"—in short, when we no longer get the good of him, do we love the lover? Not by a—not by a good deal! I do not know so very much about it, but I dare say that Angelina's friends are in much the case that Edwin's are. Perhaps there is an added drop of bitterness in their cup. She has hooked her fish; stands a good chance of landing him. They are still looking at the placid cork. So far, not a nibble.

And all the rest of us that are not relatives and friends, do we love the lover or do we laugh at him? Is he not the most ridiculous of figures, and the more lover he, the bigger fool? If he does not see it and writhe at the sight it is because he is blind, not only to the faults of his Adored One, but also toward his own mental attitude. Any one able to contemplate without a grim the spectacle of lovers holding hands and gawking into one another's eyes should certainly consult a medical man. His liver is not working right. And if you could hear them talk! I shall not own that I have ever willingly eavesdropped, but even if I had not overheard I should still know what foolishness they utter. I have a memory, I hope.

George Bernard Shaw has said with truth that, though all plays and novels are about love, nobody yet has dared to write a real love-scene. A paradox; but paradoxes, as a rule, are just as reasonable as so much building-brick. They square with truth. There are very many reasons why no one yet has ever done so, but it will be enough to say that it would be too comical to be endured. There is no salary big enough to tempt an actor faithfully to portray the part. *Pas si bête.*

Let us go further: Do we not look

upon the lover much as we look upon the man a little overtaken in his drink? If the indulgence be a trivial one it is a thing to chuckle over. It is a good joke on him. He is human, just as we all are. This is the time that we have caught him "with the goods on him." But sometimes his folly is no laughing-matter. Women or wine, by either route a man goes to the devil swiftly and utterly.

Nail Mr. Emerson's aphorism to the counter. It is false coinage and should not be uttered. But this is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received: "All the world loves love." I mean the Edwin-Angelina love, which every novel and every drama must have for its spinal column or perish everlasting. Every "tag" of book or play must be spoken through the "Wedding March" as it comes bouncing down the tonal stairsteps from G above the staff. Query: How did they ever celebrate a true and proper nuptial before the days of Mendelssohn and Wagner? We do not sympathize enough with our unfortunate ancestors lacking, even in the midst of luxury, what we should call the bare necessities of life. Play-goers and novel-readers delight in love and demand that in these works that shall be taken seriously which in real life they jeer and mock at!

This is absurd. Of course it is. That's what I'm trying to tell you. That is just the reason love should be included in the philosophy of the absurd.

In the old philosophy, as in the old geometry, whatever was absurd was, by that token, looked upon as of no value. But a new geometry has arisen, which says infinity is just the same as zero; which says that the Absurd is full of value, and is as true as preaching, if the conditions precedent be changed ever so slightly, as thus: "A straight line is *not necessarily* the shortest distance between two points." Similarly, my philosophy, which is so new that it is somewhat tacky yet, sees in the Absurd that which is of the very greatest value to the race. It must be so, since the passion for it is so universal. The ear-

nest and unquenchable desire in us to believe what we know is not so cannot be there for nothing. Its study has been too long neglected.

The fatal error of the old geometry was that it regarded everything as motionless. The fatal error of the old philosophy was that it considered Man a creature totally arrived. The new geometry proclaims that every point, which had been looked upon as dimensionless, momently describes a curved line of multiform complexity. The earth spins on its axis; it revolves about the sun, the sun and all our sister planets fly toward *lambda Herculis*, probably whirling round some other center in the universe, God alone knows where. The new philosophy proclaims that Man is not alone himself, but he that was, and is, and is to come.

Considering Man, then, as a moving body, we shall apprehend that love is not so foolish as it looks, though it is the comicallest of all of Mother Nature's practical jokes. The dear old lady has a keen sense of humor, there is no doubt about it. Her jokes are often rough, though, and sometimes the individual finds it hard to see just where the laugh comes in, but they are all well meant, and, in the long run, always work out our everlasting benefit.

Nature is not so rich as she is commonly supposed to be, and she must cut her coat according to her cloth. She has so much to do that it would be impossible for her to get it done if she had not copied after Tom Sawyer and the way he fooled the neighbor boys into whitewashing the fence his aunt had set him at.

It keeps her busy night and day seeing to it that the population in all forms of life does not fall below the normal. Children are, without a doubt, most interesting creatures, but, dear me! they are a bother. No one will dispute this, or the corollary.

Marriage has been going on for quite a spell now; several centuries, I believe. If I dared to, I would say millenniums, for, though our ancestors, living as they did on tree-limbs, where there were very few conveniences, had no "Wed-

ding March" or organist; no old shoes to throw after "the happy pair"; no ring, no veil, no *mousseline de soie* to make the bride's frock out of, and—I blush to say it—in good sooth, no frock; no bishop, even from a Western diocese, to officiate, and probably no doctor of divinity—none of the *forma* of the Sacrament of Matrimony; yet, without doubt, marriage existed as an institution. Also without doubt, divorce existed quite as plentifully as in the best of modern society, and even more so, since in those days it was not attended with a fatiguing exile in South Dakota.

Then, as now, "the high contracting parties," having their eyes holden, believed they pleased nobody but themselves. Then, as now, they had no notion that, behind her hand, nature was sniggering at them for being such easy victims to her practical joke. They were led into it by love. Yes, I suppose that you may call it that. It was a general and not too particular a love, something like that which flames within the bosom of a sailor home from a three-years' cruise. To arboreal Edwin, tree-top Angelina was a woman, just a woman. His mental attitude was quite the same as that of these old fellows with the white mustaches that propose the toast: "The Ladies; God bless 'em!" I think if such had their deserts and rights they would, this very minute, be hanging to a tree-limb by one hand and gibbering: "Crrr-r-r-rik-kik-kik!" at each other.

Tree-top Angelina married arboreal Edwin because he cuffed her into submission, yielding not without a vigorous resistance on her part, a lovely trait which we call "maiden coyness" now. That was another joke of Mother Nature's, for if Angelina went right along with him without a fuss the chances were that she would get a poor and spindling kind of Edwin, and it was necessary that husbands should be the very finest specimens obtainable. For nature foresaw, if they did not, the coming day when football would be the *summum bonum* of our halls of learning, a necessitous complement to the Athletic Girl.

After a few million years of this mechanical gravitation of the sexes toward each other, it got so that nature could tell, without having to look twice, that we were men and women, not chimpanzees. Still later, when she felt tolerably safe about our physical development, she began to carry out her plan of making gods of us. But gods are gods, not by bone and muscle only, however beautifully shaped, but by mental qualities. It was no easy thing to do this, now, I tell you. If our ancestors were like the primitive peoples now existing—and there is every reason to suppose they were—they were a sufficiently ungodly lot. They must have been something awful.

The worst of it was, the males of every kind of creature were such trifling no-account things. That did well enough for common animals, but the human male would have to be quite as good as the female—or nearly so; it is another of nature's practical jokes that, to induce man to become as good as woman, he has to think that he is better than she. Isn't that funny? If the male human was inferior the whole scheme of making gods would have to be abandoned. Also, young godlings require plentiful and careful feeding for a long time, more than the mother of them can provide unaided. Evidently Edwin would have to cleave to Angelina for a long time and to her alone.

How to arrange it? Primitive love would never turn the trick. A new kind had to be invented. "*Dux famina facti*," says our old friend P. Virgilius Maro, who knew a thing or two. Into the bosom of our tree-top Angelina was inserted jealousy. Edwin was all for the ladies; God bless 'em! but Angelina put a stop to that. She bit and scratched the other girls and pulled their locks out by handfuls till she convinced them Edwin were better left alone to her. Him she harried till he learned the truth of what Pope has written that—you know what place—hath no fury like a woman scorned. So he stayed home nights and behaved himself for the sake of peace.

It gradually got so that, from loving

all women because they were women, he came to love but one out of all the rest. That's the theory, at any rate. If it doesn't quite work out in practise, remember we're a little new at it, most of us. Give us a few more generations of romanticists and life will be, if not one grand, sweet song, a very fair imitation of a magazine short story.

Sticking to Angelina and the godlings made it necessary that Edwin should go to work, although he did not want to. Surely habits of industry and conjugal fidelity were worth the trouble to obtain, all in their own right, but it is quite evident now, I hope, that they are not the end but the means whereby our end is to be attained—that is to say, our godhead. Here is where real love comes in. For what is love but admiration of those noble qualities we see in either sex, noble because they make for better and better in the human race?

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear—in each of us, in all of us taken together, there is the Man that was, and is, and is to come. When the finest woman loves a man, it is because she sees in him: First, a male to whom she gravitates mechanically; second, a man, up to the outward seeming of a god, and, last of all, a man whose inward thoughts are godlike, outwardly expressed in acts that certainly insure the nurture and the admonition of young godlings which shall be nearer to Olympus by a little step than any godlings that have ever been before.

I said that in each of us, in all of us taken together, there is the Man that was, and is, and is to come. It is quite clear that in our very modernest society these three classes may be plainly seen. By a rough generalization, they may be distinguished as the theater-going class, the novel-reading class, and the serious-reading class. Whatever other definition may be made for Man, it seems to me the one that fits him best, contains the idea that he is less than any other animal under the direct and immediate régime of Natural Selection and the Survival of the Fittest, mechanically considered.

The substitute for them seems to be

love. It must lead us upward. But how? By our ideas. Whence do we get them? Mostly froth books and plays. We may figure the whole human race as ranged on stairs that reach upward from the brute to the high heaven itself. At different levels stand the dramatists and novelists holding out their hands to help the groups a step or two below them to a higher ground. This is still another of Dame Nature's jokes. No more than any other animal would a writer deliberately set himself to do a noble work. So she stuffs him full of nonsense about his Art, and he whitewashes her fence just to show off before the other boys. But even when they wilfully and meretriciously stoop far below their level, "pandering," as we say, "to vulgar taste," they cannot choose but help, for, however low they stoop, there are vast multitudes below them still. Very continually remember that extremely few of those we meet upon the streets are even half-way civilized. They are in the age but not of it. A blanket Indian is a long way farther on the civilizing path than many a white "hobo."

Of the theater-going classes, I do not think we apprehend at all the almost pathetic savagery. I remember once I sat beside a mother and her daughter at a performance of "Aida." They were well dressed, even richly dressed, and might have passed for "carriage people" had not the daughter read aloud the program to her mother. I trust I kept my face straight as she stumbled on the unfamiliar names of characters, *Rhadames*, whom she called "Randoms"; *Amonasro*, which became "Ammonio"; and "exterior of the temple of Isis," which suffered a sea-change into "extraordinary of the temple of is is," as if the Egyptian goddess were a reduplication of the third person, singular, and present tense of the verb "to be."

But I could not hammer flat the grin that wrinkled when, after a hopeless struggle with the argument of the opera, she exercised the privilege of her sex and jumped to the conclusion. "Oh, well," she sighed, "A-der gets him," and settled back into her fauteuil, satisfied.

She was typical, believe me, of a large majority of theater-goers. In their love-affairs they are barely human beings. Their mean low-water mark of practical expectation is the mechanical gravitation toward the opposite sex.

But they are also gods *in posse*. That they have slightly higher ideals, unattained as yet, is evident from a favorite stump-speech story—which in its nature has to represent the average status of the common people or go entirely unappreciated. It is, that once there was an old maid that daily made her prayer in her barn for a husband. An undesirable parti, learning of this, hid himself in the haymow, and, at the dramatic moment, called out a description of himself:

"Will a humpbacked tailor do?"

"Anybody, Lord!" answered the spinster.

The people laugh at this because they know just how it is themselves.

To the majority of those to whom the theater appeals more than the printed book the exposition of a love-story wherein "A-der" gets a particular man, the one she chooses and not the only one she has a chance to get; a human being, not an improved chimpanzee; a fine-looking fellow and one that can lick nine others in a row, is a revelation, Heaven-sent, of higher things. To be sure, looking upward for a long time makes one's neck ache, and the managers, in their mercy, relieve the strain from time to time by setting forth relaxing Palais Royal farces, wherein all husbands have a monkey's morals. No depth in literature is so low, however, but that there is a depth beneath it, and even these plays that give vacations to the conscience are not wholly bad. The wives in them are almost always decent and deplore their husbands' orang-utan behavior. It is something gained when Virtue gets a word in edgewise, even if it be laughed at in the next speech. Some of its contents sticks to every pan. If you don't like these dramas of the Missing Link, nobody is going to make you go to see them. If you do genuinely like them, it shows that they are indicated in your case. It

shows you really ought to be living in a tree and are not yet accustomed to the use of clothing. Go and see such dramas. They will do you good.

Quite a long step upward is the novel-reading class. This may be proved not only by the fact that most novel-readers can get the good out of a page of print without having to move their lips, but also by the fact that the stories of the highest-class dramas are nearly on the level with the very tawdriest novels. Even if suitable in form, a high-class novel could not possibly succeed upon the stage. The audience could not comprehend it. For any novel to adopt the standard of the sex-relation even of a high-class play is practically impossible. And this is so, even though, as Mr. Howells says, stories that take the view-point of the animal are immediately interesting to the best of us. It is an interest that mulets our self-respect too heavily. We cannot pay the price. Our novels must be such as a good woman can read. See that! Did I not tell you it was Woman led us on the upward path?

The ideal love is romantic to the last degree. It is the pure and fragrant blossom of the water-lily. The realist may show us that the water-lily's stem sinks down through very murky water; he may dig up the roots to prove they burrow in impure and most unfragrant mud. It is the truth. To think the flower can exist without its stem and roots is most absurd. But it is absurdity, I tell you, that gets us onward. In the tree-tops nobody ever washed by any chance; in our modern dwellings no mud may be tracked from out of doors.

Edwin may think he'd like to have a story that didn't have so much silly love-talk in it. Now, there is "Sapho" and there is "Bel-Ami"; that is the kind of stories Edwin wants. He can't get 'em. Not in the original English. The French will write them for him, for, just after they climbed down from the trees, a cocoanut fell on their brains and stopped their growth in godliness. But no English-speaking writer dare pen such stuff. Angelina sets the pace with us, and her face is turned to Olympus.

Edwin would like to see a story wherein a man meets a girl at the church door for the first time and marries her and lives happily ever after, which is quite probable, since a man can hardly go amiss in marrying any one of the hundred or more girls he knows in his own station in life. But he can't get that story, for that's only a good way to rear men and women; it is no way at all to breed godlings.

Angelina wants a story wherein a fellow loves a girl and cannot have her. So he stays a bachelor all his life long out of devotion to that one girl. She wants that story, and she gets it. *O mihi beate Martine!* Doesn't she get it? Boiled and roasted, fricasseed and stewed, *en casserole* and *en ragout*, in fifty thousand varying styles of cookery she gets it.

It is absurd, of course—it is absurd that any man should love long where he is not loved in return. It is even wicked that a big, fine, healthy fellow should not find a match and rear us godlings for a better day. But that is just the value of the absurd. By its exaggeration it calls the yokel Edwin's attention to an ideal. He can't come near it in his practise, but somewhere near it is pretty good, much better than the stodgy settling back to where he stood a million years ago.

It is absurd, of course, that love should be regarded as the greatest thing in life. We know it isn't. We know that June, with all its sweet perfumery and brilliant flowerings, is not the most important month in all the year. Nature, the "josher," makes us think it is, but all the time wherein we rave about the flowers and do our best to help them do their best, she smiles a knowing smile

and thinks of October and how the branches then will droop and hang heavy with the ripening fruit.

Love is not the most important thing, but during our upward progress love is our most instant need. If no one married but those that truly loved each other with a high and holy love, it would do the world more good than forty thousand socialisms rolled into one, and that put into practise.

But I fear that I betray a confidence. Nature does not mean for us to know this. Fooled by her wiles, each dramatist and novelist sings to his coterie a different song, and all sing "*Annie Laurie*," overdrawing and exaggerating up to and beyond absurdity desirable mental traits, just as the silly rhymester gave to Miss Laurie a brow like to a snow-drift and a neck like to a swan—isn't that ridiculous? And to what end? That Man, in one being he that was, and is, and is to come, shall hear and aspire to higher things; that the mere animal shall grow to be a human being, the woman measuring all suitors by the ideal of a handsome husband, the man by the ideal of a wife so beautiful that all will turn and look after her, by which the outward seeming of the god is gained; that the mere human being shall have before him the ideal of the life divine in which the fadeless beauty of a lovely soul replaces that which withers as the years go by.

Dying Vespasian turned himself in bed and whispered: "Methinks I soon shall be a god." It was the Roman emperor's last and bitterest jest, but the human race that has but just begun to live may say in sweet and solemn earnest, now that love has come: "Methinks I soon shall be a god."

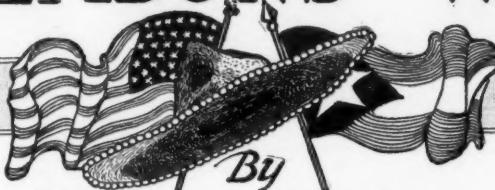


CAUTION

B E careful, little hands, in reaching far
To grasp the fabled pot of rainbow gold;
You do not lose in groping for a star
The gem you may unconsciously now hold.

BETH SLATER WHITSON.

CAZABON'S WAY



IT was hot in Matanzas. Down the strip of blazing blue and vivid pink street there was not a shadow; the sky burned. In Pierre Cazabon's linen-shop it was, by contrast, cool and black. The long flap of canvas at the big door—the only opening—shut out the glare; the red brick floor gleamed from a fresh sprinkling; whatever of trade-wind rolled into the heat bulged the loosely tied canvas, and it flapped like a slack sail.

Lucy sat in the deepest shadow behind the counter, marking a box of handkerchiefs. She was brown-haired and blue-eyed, a sedate sweetness in her face. Her hair was sleek and shining, her expression placid with the drugged content which comes from the jog-trot of peaceful days and the possession of satisfactory small things. She wore a starched gray linen dress and turned-over embroidered collar. A hymn reminiscent of her Connecticut home trickled unmindfully from her lips, while her reflections loped easily from one point to another:

Oh, for the peace that floweth like a river,
Making earth's desert places bloom and
smile.

The new shop would be ready in another month. How proud Pierre would be on the opening day! He had little dreamed when he tramped Cuban streets, a hungry, barefooted boy of thirteen, a runaway from a French sail-

ing ship, that one day he would own one of the biggest shops in Matanzas, right on the Plaza, not far from the alcalde's. He had succeeded—it was very sweet—what a happy five years she had known as his wife—if only the baby had lived.

Oh, for the power to grasp Heaven's bright
forever,
Amid the shadows of earth's little while.

The house was so lonely without Pierre; only four days since he left. How could she wait three weeks longer for him? His deep, loving eyes, his boyish laugh that would come so unexpectedly—she missed them. New York was so far away, a terrible place, where people were being killed by explosions and run over. How she loved him! Oh, if anything happened to him!

This thought had a fang that roused her. She put it from her, and slid nimbly down. As she did so, the loose knot that held down the canvas at the door was untied at one corner and a man stepped in. Lucy at once became the saleswoman and stood erect, one hand on the counter. She placed the customer at a glance. He was an American cavalry soldier, his khaki worn and stained, a bandanna tucked in around his sweating neck, his soft, fawn-hued hat bent back from his forehead in a flare. But she did not see his face clearly until he turned from retying the canvas and came toward the counter with a slightly swaying step.

Her first full look at him was of sudden questioning, then came frantic un-

belief, and this changed in a second to petrified recognition and conviction. She could not move. Her eyes were like stones in her yellowing face, her lips fell apart and left her mouth gaping and silent.

"*Fosforo?*" the man asked in a thick voice, smiling in a silly way, and blinking at her in the sudden darkness, as he held up an unlighted *cigarro*. "*Fosforo, señorita?*"

As yet he had not had opportunity to recognize her. She might have eluded him, might have turned her back swiftly before his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, might have sent Agadita back with the match to him. She might have done all these things and so at least have escaped that moment, but she could not move. She was like lead, chained to the spot, in the grip of the fate that had found her out, as she had so often in earlier, less assured years, feared it would. Her silence penetrated through the hazy aftermath of his drunkenness. He bent a long look at her, then leaned nearer, gripping the counter on his side, and an amazed, jeering smile stole slowly over his face, an insult from the curl of his lips to his lifted brows.

"Great Scott—you here—you!" His eyes narrowed. "Good Lord!"

In the long, obsessed stare that followed, the silence was like a coil about them. It snapped sharply as Lucy fell back against the rolls of snowy linen, her cheeks as blanched.

"Hush!" she whispered, her head lunging forward in the effort to speak. She moved her hand stiffly toward the back of the shop in a gesture of caution. "Wait—wait—"

"I've got all day," the man sang out, with a sudden lusty cheerfulness, ghastly when compared with the look of death in her face.

As a mulatto girl came from the back room with a plate of limes, he pulled over a chair, settled it with a bang on the red brick floor, crossed his knees comfortably when he sat down, and grinned thoughtfully at his lifted boot.

Lucy made a desperate struggle for composure as she met Agadita's curious eyes. "Agadita," she said in Spanish,

"you can go to Margarita's now for my dress. It was to be ready to-day."

Despatched on a mile walk in the burning midday! It was the hour when every one rested but this ever-busy Señora Cazabon, but this craziness had never happened before. Agadita felt insurrection but looked humility as she went, with automatic obedience, into the hot sun.

"Now, Bernard Marsh, what are you going to do?" Lucy said rapidly as the canvas fell behind the shuffling feet. He still grinned and tilted his hat forward as he scratched his head in un hurried thought. "Are you going to give me up?"

"I'm going to have one of those there limes, first thing," he said, stretching his hand for the plate she pushed abruptly toward him. "Great for a hang-over." He smiled. "Been on a bender for two days. Acting signal-sergeant, I am—solid with the captain —can get a pass any old time."

Her suspense showed in her twitching fingers as she watched him leisurely cut and suck the lime.

"What are you going to do?" she said again. "Hurry before the girl gets back—she's the only one of the servants who knows some English, and she'd be sure to listen. What are you going to do?"

"You know what I ought to do," he said, with a wink. "I ought to telegraph to the warden at Weathersfield and say: 'Rebecca Spencer, escaped convict, is in Matanzas.' I ought to go to my colonel and tell him the same thing: 'Rebecca Spencer, who escaped from the Connecticut State prison—let's see—seven—eight years ago?—Rebecca Spencer is—'"

"Oh, don't—for the love of God!" she shrieked at him. "Don't say that name again." Startled, he wavered to his feet. She was staring at him like a mad woman, trembling in a convulsion that cramped her knees. "I'd forgotten—and you've brought it all back. Oh! oh! oh!"

The cries were stifled, and her head sank lower, stiffly, with each one, until she lay abjectly across the counter. She

did not look at him, but after a moment held out her hands dumbly. When she spoke it was in a voice without body:

"Bernard—for the sake of the old days—don't give me up. You knew my mother—my father—you knew me all my life—don't give me up, Bernard. I'm happy here. I'm a good woman—my husband doesn't know—I do no one any harm. Oh, don't tell, Bernard. Didn't I suffer enough? I had four years of it—four years—and innocent—innocent!"

"That's the thing to say, of course."

She looked up at him with a dumb appeal, not unlike a look his horse's eyes often had when he was very tired and urged to fresh action.

"But I was. I didn't mean it—it was like a dream. I told it in court at the time." She raised herself and spoke from almost closed, quivering lips: "There are two who know the truth—God—and Milly Woods. I've often thought of that—it's comforted me. Milly Woods knows now that though my hands pushed her back to her death, they were innocent hands." He regarded her impassively. "But what's the use of going all over that?" she continued wildly, her eyes keeping watch between the door and his face. "I'm asking you now not to give me up—you won't have the heart—you'll go away and leave me in peace—here in my home—this sweet home," she sobbed, holding out her arms. "My husband loves me—it would break his heart—he's a good man—he'd never forgive the lies I've told him to cover up that time—and if they took me back to Weatherfield I'd go insane to think I'd hurt *him*—my husband."

She pressed her hands to her lips, and the sobs against them were like the charge of a shut-in sea.

A look of speculation had grown in Marsh's eyes as she talked.

"This is your home? This store?"

"Yes."

"Your husband owns it?"

"Yes—yes. He's succeeded so well—I've helped him. He's going to open another—a bigger place, on the Plaza," she said breathlessly. "He's gone to

New York to order some splendid fixtures. Oh, don't ruin us. Don't spoil it all."

"What is he?" he asked, with a facetious sneer. "Dago, Español, or Cuban?"

"His father was French, his mother Scotch. Well—well," she pleaded, trembling, "what are you going to do?"

"Give me a match, will you?" he broke in, his tone slow and speculative. "That's what I came in here for."

She handed him a box from the ledge behind her. He rolled the brown *cigarro* between his lips and said, after a long puff:

"How much to keep mum?"

"What do you mean?"

"How many pesetas or good American dollars do you plank down for me to keep my mouth shut?" He stared at her impudently. "Now do you get it?"

With a look of hysterical relief she shifted her head. "Why, I'll give you all I have."

"That's the way to talk. Now you're sensible," he cried, bringing his fist down hard on the counter. "How much?"

"I've got three hundred dollars, American gold, all my own, that I've saved slowly and—"

"Got it here?" he asked, his nostrils flattening in an ugly look of avarice.

"Yes, I'll get it for you."

She returned in a few moments with a small cloth bag and handed it over gladly, eager to get it into his possession—this, her all, saved by many small economies and strangled desires—and so rivet his promise to go away and let her life go on as if he had not seen her. He counted it slowly, and pocketed it deeply and securely.

"That'll do," he said, went half-way to the door before he paused—"for the present."

"But I have no more," she faltered.

"For the present," he repeated, lifting the canvas.

"You don't mean, Bernard Marsh —" she cried, in sudden weakness, running from behind the counter.

His answer was a laugh from the other side of the curtain, and she heard

him singing "Bill Bailey" as he went hilariously down the sun-baked street.

Three days later, toward twilight, he came again. She was bidding a customer *adios* in the friendly Cuban manner when she saw him cross the street. Her aching eyes had unconsciously watched for him every moment of these three days until after ten o'clock at night when she knew the sounding of taps at the camp made his presence, except at rare intervals, a necessity. Through the rest of the night she had lain with dry, hot eyes in desperate fear of the morning.

Marsh came for more money. When Lucy said she had given him all she had, he laughed comfortably.

"Why, all the stuff in this place means money."

"But it's not mine. It's my husband's," she said, her stern, pale face a white disk in the shadow.

"What's his yours."

"Oh, don't!" she moaned faintly. "Don't be a coward—don't feed on my terror, Bernard Marsh. I gave you all I owned and I gave it gladly. You hadn't seen so much money in all your life, I guess. But you've come back in a few days to hound me, to make me steal. I won't do it."

A threat leaped into his eyes. She had not seen any harder, colder look on a face even in her darkest years. "I guess you'll do it—if you think a minute."

She looked at him, her fingers fluttering from her lips to her sinking heart, the thirst that comes from fear and tastes of brass in her mouth. "You mean that if I don't you'll betray me—and after taking my money?" He said nothing as she turned from him and hid her face against the shelves. "If I give you more now, will this end it?" she asked feebly, and then turned to face him with burning eyes. "Will it, I say? Or are you going to keep on hounding me, killing me?"

"When I get what I think it's worth I'll quit," he said, bending forward a little, speaking quietly and very distinctly. "Did you suppose your three hundred plunks would pay for your being

kept out of jail—no, nor three thousand, by rights. Gosh! You must think me a yam. Why, you ought to want to *pour* money over me. I keep quiet and you're this French fellow's wife, having a soft thing of it here; I *don't* keep quiet and you're Rebecca Spencer with a cell that you took French leave from, all ready and waiting for you. How does that strike you?"

As he spoke the old name a wildness rushed over Lucy. She swept up a key that hung on a tape at her side, opened the drawer under the counter, pulled it out to its fullest and gathered up notes and coins with both hands. She thrust the heap at him.

"Take it—go away—don't come back—oh, don't come back!"

He pulled the money in stolidly and pushed it into his pockets.

"Not come back is all hanky-panky," he said, with decision. "Don't be a fool—Mrs. Cazabon. Of course I'll come back, and you see that I always go away with just this sort of fodder. I happen to need all I can get of it just now, more than any other time. My enlistment's up in eight months, and this wad will put me on Easy Street." Something in her face touched him to a second's pity. "You deal square by me—and I'll deal square by you. 'Something for nothing,' is a hell of a motto—don't you go on that."

When he was gone she sat alone in the unlighted shop, grim and vacant-eyed. Memories of her girlhood in the Connecticut village came back to her. She recalled Bernard Marsh's father. He was a miser. He had starved and cheated to save money. His meanness and avarice had been part of the gossip of the place. She remembered the look on Bernard's face the day she had given him the three hundred dollars; he had looked like old Seth Marsh then. He had become a vagabond from chance. He was a miser by heredity. There was no hope for her. He would bleed her of money while she had a penny. Where would it end? Just how soon would Pierre find it all out?

When Agadita came to call her to dinner she was sitting with her elbows

on her knees, her eyes staring sightlessly ahead under her shielding hands. She made no response, and only stirred wearily when the girl dared to lay her long, brown forefinger on her shoulder.

"The señora has eaten no dinner. She sits alone and seems to hear voices," Agadita said later to Gil the cook. "Some one has put a curse upon her."

II.

A few loquacious, Cuban citizens, a half-dozen *mulatiquos* with baskets of cocoanuts, guava sandwiches, and sugar-cane, and as many American soldiers, were waiting at the sleepy Matanzas railway-station for the evening train from Havana. Bernard Marsh was one of the soldiers.

It was a beautiful twilight. A crescent moon cut the faintly greenish sky, a lemon-colored glitter gave an unreal radiance to the old town, making the pink houses seem built of coral, and the white ones of snow, and the blue as if washed by the wonderful azure bay. A high, sweet note from a vesper bell came down at intervals from Montserrat. Peace drenched the fast-going light.

Marsh saw nothing of this. His thoughts were of material things. His mind was a scales in which he was weighing money. He had finished with Lucy. She had sold her rings, and the old silver that had been bought by Pierre from needy Cuban aristocrats; piece after piece of the costliest linen, many rolls of hand-made lace with fibers like cobweb veins, scores of dozens of handkerchiefs—anything, almost everything had been sold here and there, to dealers and others, at whatever they would bring, all to fill his ever-open, greedy hands. He had finished with Lucy. Now he was waiting for Cazabon. Would the husband let the wife go back to jail, or would he begin the paying? The uncertainty was the only spot on the sun of Marsh's speculation.

He was alone at one end of the platform watching the passengers alight.

He believed he would know Cazabon at once. He had seen a picture of him in a photograph-shop near the San Juan bridge, and recalled a description of him he had recently overheard one officer give another at a café table near his own:

"Pale, and looks something like one's romantic idea of a priest. Not tall, but a broad-shouldered fellow; thinnish, with long arms. He has thick black hair, gray in streaks. He walks fast always, with his head up. Queer sort of eyes—awfully dreamy, but then so brilliant and keen sometimes they go through you. There's something warm and surprising about his smile—it gets you. I spend hours in his shop talking to him. He's entirely self-educated, self-made, and so original, so interesting. You'd be surprised that such a pale, thoughtful fellow could have such purpose and persistence. He started life a cabin-boy, father a sailor; and, by Jove! he looks and carries himself more like one of the aristocrats who went to the guillotine with snuff-box and lace handkerchief than any Frenchman I've ever met."

This verbal photograph remained in Marsh's mind with sufficient distinctness for him to set his lips and straighten his shoulders as he saw a man in gray clothes and a soft, black hat step from the train. He carried some packages, and, as he placed them in the arms of a *mulatiquo* who ran to him, he lifted his head in a restless way, and the look of expectancy in his wide-open, brilliant eyes swept the station.

"Looking for his wife," Marsh thought, chuckling. "Guess he's pretty well mashed on her. If he doesn't kill her, I guess he'll plunk down the cash, all right."

The boy plunged ahead with the bundles. Cazabon with a last look around followed; and at a little distance Marsh followed him until a quiet street was reached.

"Señor? Your name's Cazabon?" Marsh asked, coming up to him.

He stopped shortly, and looked with a directness that was challenging into Marsh's eyes. "That's my name," he

answered, his pronunciation and accent more cultivated than the American's.

Marsh stood restfully, his legs apart, his hands on his hips. "I want to speak to you—a little business matter—"

"I'm in a hurry to get home. If you want to see me—" And he made a movement to go.

"Right now, Mr. Cazabon," said Marsh, as a monitor might have spoken; "and not in your home, but just over there in the *fonda*, '*De Dos Hermanos*'—that's where."

"I don't like your manner of speaking," said Cazabon, his eyes level and cold.

"See here—it's about your wife," said Marsh brutally.

A flush of haughty anger swept over Cazabon's face, his right hand shut instinctively; but before he could speak, Marsh continued in a slow, important tone: "Want to hear it, or shall I tell it to the first policeman?"

A distracted, pathetic amazement replaced the anger in his face. For a few seconds he stared, spellbound, then made a vague, hurried gesture of obedience. They crossed to the *fonda*, which was just opposite, its walls a screeching green, a shimmer of green garden in the last purple of day showing through the open door at the back, a big green paroquet with scarlet head swinging from the middle of the ceiling. The place was empty.

"We might as well talk business over a rickey," said Marsh, without looking at Cazabon, who sat down opposite him at one of the small tables.

"I want nothing," said Cazabon, a hint of his suspense in the sharp, brooding tone. "Don't keep me waiting."

Marsh looked about cautiously, to be sure old Pedro Vacques, the proprietor, was not within ear-shot at the moment. He stuck his head forward and began to speak rapidly. Any one watching from the door would not have known that the pale, studentlike man opposite the dusty soldier was having the face of his life changed for him. He listened in automatic repose. After a few short questions he closed his eyes to hide his

heart from the other, and remained motionless, his shut hand upon the table.

At the shop Lucy was waiting for him. She sat stolidly in the dusk, drugged with despair, her eyes on the street. After the *mulatiquo* brought the bundles, and she knew Pierre was really in Matanzas, she started up and walked about, surges of weakness chilling her flesh and sickening her. She was painfully changed, quite unlike the woman who had sat contentedly marking the handkerchiefs and singing the hymn three weeks before. The bird-like plumpness of her body had wasted to angles and hollows. Her eyes glistened in the sunken sockets. The almost severe neatness for which she was noted was marred by a wrinkled collar fastened without exactness, and the bulging strands of hair against her temples, which she kept continually pushing back.

Her thoughts were like brass bells in her brain—Bernard Marsh had probably met Pierre, had told him as he had threatened. She almost wished this would be done that she might be spared the first words of confession. If Pierre came without knowing, he would have to be told almost at once. He would soon miss the goods from the stock and the silver, and she had no money to give him for almost a month's sales. It seemed wonderful to her that she could be alive with such a meeting before her. And after it—what unspeakable future? At the last question, an unearthly, victorious smile crept around her grim lips. She would never go back to prison. By heredity and training she shrank from suicide—but she would never go back to prison.

Pierre came, and the anguish that rushed over her at sight of the loved face turned her faint. He was very pale, but not frightened or forbidding. Then he did not know. He caught her hands and drew her to him, and she sank, trembling, into his arms. He kissed her as she lay against him. It might be the last time he would kiss her. The thought made her arms tighten about him with a surprising strength, her eyes, all fever and tears,

gazed into his that were so lustrous and steadfast, and she said very slowly, in a stifled, vibrating way:

"I do love you, Pierre. I love you. Oh, I love you, I love you."

"Were you afraid of me, Lucy?" he whispered, while her lips were against his. "Don't be afraid any more."

The ground seemed to slide from beneath her feet. He held her to him shelteringly.

"You know?" she faltered.

"My poor Lucy!"

"You know—and you don't blame me—hate me?"

His gaze through the shadows was a thing to rest in. "You are my wife," he said. "I look after my own. We Cazabons are like that."

More than an hour later, after he had made her eat and drink a little, and they were on the gallery in the moonlight, Lucy spoke of her old life. She was sitting on a stool beside Pierre, her face against his arm. Her eyes looked away into the shadows of the *patio*. Behind them across the sitting-room the shop was dark, shuttered, and silent. Sounds from the street drifted to this inner, open space over the low, pot-tiled roofs.

"Every word I tell you, Pierre, is the truth, as if God were to judge me to-night," she said, in a soft, guarded voice. "I was brought up, as I've often told you, in a small village in Connecticut, and my father had the general store. I kept house for him. I never told you before that when I was nineteen he failed in business and fell very ill. I had to go to work at something to get money for him. It was a desperate time. The only thing available was a place in a factory, eight miles away, where they made locks and keys. I was a pretty girl then, Pierre; and a very proud one. I was outwardly reserved, but I had an impatient, hot temper, which I had to struggle against, and which sometimes got the better of me. My first bitter lesson in self-control came that summer when I had to go to the factory, for I had been studying, hoping one day to be a school-teacher. It was the sorrow that came after, how-

ever, that really made me as I am now—taught me humility and patience.

"Well, in the factory there was a forewoman, a young widow, named Milly Woods. She was a coarse, good-looking girl, and I think she drank secretly. She was engaged to the assistant manager—or, at any rate, she was madly in love with him, and he had made her think he meant to marry her. This was before I came. After that he was brutal to her, and he showered his attentions on me. I didn't want him, but I was afraid to lose the work if I snubbed him. For every favor from him, I had an insult from Milly Woods. I could see how she hated me. She couldn't discharge me, but she made my day's work a hell. She made me ridiculous to my companions, taunted me about my poor, made-over clothes—oh, I can't tell you all the little, nasty ways she made me suffer.

"To retaliate, I encouraged her lover. More than this, I wrote a letter—several letters—to a girl friend; and these letters afterward sent me to prison. In them I said how I hated Milly Woods—that I wished her dead. I said that I'd kill her if I wasn't afraid. All this I wrote with the undisciplined passion of a girl, easing my mind by the hot words. But when they were read aloud in court they sounded awful; as if I'd only waited for a good chance.

"Well, she came to my bench one day, and, before the others, said frightful things to me. She was beside herself with despair, for the man had that morning brutally jilted her. I tried to appear indifferent, and lifted the glass of water I had been about to drink. She struck it against my mouth so roughly it cut me. I fell back, and the glass broke. I had no clear idea of what I was doing—I saw a red haze—I seized her, and, without realizing that we were only a few steps from the greatest wheels of the machinery, that were going like mad, I pushed her back, and struck her as she had struck me. It was her shriek and the shrieks of the rest that brought me to a knowledge of what I'd done—too late—she had been caught in the suction of the wheels

—it was a frightful death—oh, it was a frightful death!

"I pleaded not guilty. I was convicted of homicide, and sent to prison for ten years. After four years I escaped. I was helped to this by one of the prison employees, who was about to leave, and who knew my father. My cousin was a governess then, and the family she was with was in Cuba. I came to her here. It seemed so remote and safe then, before the war brought the Americans. Now it's different. What are we to do, Pierre? What are we to do?" she whispered, trembling against him.

His fingers touched her chill, damp cheek. "You are afraid—you will always be afraid now."

"Oh, I am so afraid."

As her voice broke in a tremor, there was a cautious but decided knocking on the shop door.

"Don't open it," said Lucy thickly, the words overlapping each other.

"I'd forgotten," said Pierre, putting his arm around her. "It's Marsh. He was to come for more money."

"But you said you gave him two hundred in the *fonda*."

"He said it wasn't enough—but it was all I had with me."

He drew her into the sitting-room, blew out all the candles but one, and lifted this to carry into the dark shop.

"Wait here," he said. "Keep out of sight. I'll speak loudly if there's any danger—anything you should know."

When he opened the shop door Marsh stepped into the leaping candle-light, and Lucy watched the meeting from her hiding-place. She saw her husband count out money and Marsh pocket it. As Cazabon held open the door, Marsh turned and said something very decided, making a gesture with his arm toward the west. She heard faintly the word "Yumuri." She saw her husband nod assuringly, and Marsh went away. When Cazabon came back she crept out and asked desperately:

"What's this last thing? What about the Yumuri?"

"I'm to meet him on the hill overlooking the Yumuri at sunset, a week from

to-day. As acting signal-sergeant, he'll be up that way to inspect the heliograph station," said Cazabon, his eyes patient.

"Well—why—why?"

"I'm to give him a thousand dollars there."

III.

The days following were unreal to Lucy, like sections of a dream, Cazabon began to make quiet, leisurely preparations for leaving Cuba. He gave it out guardedly to his friends that his visit to New York had unsettled him, made him ambitious. He wanted to go to the States. He declared that if he had a good offer he would sell both the shop in Contreras Street and the new one on the Plaza, get all his money in hand, and open a business in New York. He said he would leave Cuba in a month if he could arrange it. When Lucy heard him say this for the first time, she felt like one groping in a mist.

"The States, Pierre?" she asked, when they were alone, after waiting vainly for him to explain. "I couldn't go back to the States."

"You never shall," he said, and drew her closer. "I'm afraid to talk; afraid of the very air listening. Ah, don't fear, my Lucy. I am making plans. You shall be happy and safe again."

His heart was in his eyes as they dwelt long upon her. During the past days his face had grown pallid and intense, like a monk's. Below the love she read a settled purpose.

Monday arrived, the day he was to meet Marsh. With a feeling of doom Lucy watched him prepare for this. They said little to each other, but at parting she clung to him in sinking pain.

"Come back to me," she whispered. "Don't let anything happen—oh, come back to me."

He comforted her, but added: "If I am not home by nine o'clock open this letter, which I leave here in the safe. You'll find money in it, and directions for your safety. It is only a precaution. Don't depress yourself by reading it unnecessarily."

"Oh, come back to me," she kept whispering stupidly.

"You are as my own heart," he said; "and God is just. Try not to be afraid."

The sluggish moments made sickening hours as she waited for him. She died in spirit many times as she paced the shop and went up and down the dark, narrow street, her senses on the alert, like a driven animal's, listening for the hunters. It was half-past eight when she saw Pierre turn the corner. He came toward the shop swiftly, almost running, but keeping in the deepest shadow, close to the houses. She retreated until she had reentered her home and stood waiting in the center of the big, cathedrallike bedroom, a half-understood fear bathing her like a shadow. She heard him enter the shop softly, lock the door with scarcely a sound; and when he came in he carried his coat rolled up. He answered her look by laying his finger on his lips, and flung the coat into a closet. She could not take her questioning stare from his face. It was damp and ghastly, the eyes exhausted, yet with triumph in them.

"What happened?" she whispered when he came to her, his hands held out.

He pushed her gently into a chair and knelt beside her.

"My wife. My darling," he said, and drew her head, kissing her eyes, her forehead, so gently he seemed blessing her.

"Tell me, Pierre—is everything all right? You met him. What happened? Something's the matter. Your coat—?"

He did not reply for a moment. The big room, with the domelike, raftered ceiling, was so still his faint, fast breath kept time with the beating of her heart. The candle in the one hanging sconce gave a mysterious, wavering half-light. The jalouses were shut, and the constant dripping of the little fountain in the *patio* was indistinct, like the sleepy whirring of locusts.

"I met him," Pierre said. "I was there first. All the time I was waiting for him, I was thinking of the three things I had brought with me—the money, a paper of quittance saying how

much he had received as the price of his silence, and my revolver."

Lucy tried to speak, but her lips remained open without a sound, a new, waiting look growing in her apprehensive eyes.

Without looking up at her, Pierre continued softly, rapidly:

"I meant him to sign the paper. That was our only hope. He might be afraid to betray us if it could be proven he had taken money. It was not much of a life-saver, but it was something. As I waited for him there in the ruined garden of the burned *casa*, not a soul within miles of us, I wanted to kill him. When he came toward me at last, his sweating face flaming with greed, I wanted to kill him—that was the French in me; my hard-living, sailor father. But I have Scotch justice, too, from my mother, and he must have his chance to make a fair bargain.

"Well, I told him what I was there for. I showed him the paper, the money. He agreed at once to sign. I could see he was crazy to get his hands on the thousand dollars. I held the paper against the wall of the *casa*, and he scrawled his name there with my fountain pen. I handed him the money.

"As he took it with one hand, he snatched the paper with the other. It was all done in a twinkling—the world whirled around me. I heard him laugh. He not only laughed, but he told me just where I was to fetch him the next money, and how much. He turned to go. I called to him. When he faced me I had him covered with the pistol."

Pierre slipped to his knees, and as he now looked up at her Lucy saw that the scene was passing again before his gaze.

"I could have shot you in the back a moment since," I said to him as he stood sneering before me, after pulling out his own pistol; 'but I didn't. If you're not all a coward, if you have one drop of man blood in you, stand up and face me now. Take your chance.'

"He laughed again. The idea of my classing myself with him as a marksman amused him. 'Better drop this business,' he said. 'Be sensible and pay up

quietly. It's better than being dead.' 'Whatever happens,' I said, 'you've had your last centavo—your last—as I call the eternal God to witness. So you might as well do this work in the most self-respecting way. Only one of us goes down that hill.'

"He saw I meant it about the money. That was all that mattered to him. Then, while he laughed again, he cursed in his disappointment, and—what he said of you—oh, what he said!—I could have killed him twenty times for that alone. But I felt he was right to laugh. I expected to die. We stood up in the garden among the weeds and broken statues and—who can explain anything in this world? Perhaps he hated me so much he was blinded by the blood in his brain; perhaps the red sun dazzled him; or most likely he was drunk, as men like him so often are, in a sluggish way, deeply, without betraying it clearly. I don't know. His shot tore my sleeve. Mine killed him."

Lucy's arms closed around him like one drowning. The whole world became but one thought:

"He is dead—there is danger now for you."

"No, chérie, no. Who will suspect me?"

"If he told any one about me, Pierre—think—think—suppose he told of me?" she whispered.

"I'm sure he didn't. Our secret meant money to him—he'd never share it while there was a chance of making it pay. Don't shiver so, dear—listen. There was no one in the *fonda* the night I went with him there. No one saw us to-night. We are safe, we are safe!"

Her lips quivered, her eyes overflowed with sudden tears, her fingers caressed his worn, lifted face. "Oh, Pierre, I've brought you to this. What you have done—for me—for me!"

"I shall wipe it from my thoughts," said Pierre, and she scarcely knew the chill, impassive, final tone as her husband's. "He was a mad dog—mad for money. He would have driven us mad—cooked us over a slow fire of torment—beggared us—and it would have been no use. At the end of all he would have

told. He was a mad dog, but I gave him his chance, and I am alive, and he is dead. God is just!"

The instincts of her lost girlhood came back to Lucy in a rush. She slipped to her knees beside Pierre, and her head fell forward on her arms.

"Pray—Pierre—pray," she breathed.

Her prayer was first of all for him—pardon—protection. Then because of Pierre's love for her she prayed for herself. They were of one stripe now, but God might pity them both. He was her all, she his. Oh, that the deep seas might not go over them and divide them.

"Lucy," Pierre whispered as they knelt there, "let me tell you of what I dream for us. Without hurry and at the best price, I'll sell out here. I'll say I'm going to the States by way of Nuevitas, so I can visit my old partner, Morales, there. When we reach Nuevitas, what is to prevent our changing our plans and going to Spain? Nothing. We will go on a sailing ship from Nuevitas, and it will appear that we take such a voyage for your health. When we reach Spain we will let all trace of us be lost, and so secretly to France. France!" he whispered; and the longing, thrilling tone made a tiny shoot of hope spring up in her heart. "Oh, I know such a place there—so hidden—a quiet spot in the vineyard country. There are little farms there, so out of the way, Lucy—little gray houses, with such flowers straggling all over them, with such high walls about them—such high, safe walls, my darling, my darling. You can never be afraid there."

"Forgive us—oh, pity us—leave us each other," she prayed passionately. "Almighty God, grant us this! Save us—oh, save us!"

Pierre's dream came true. Three weeks later they said good-by to the many friends sorry to lose them, and took the train to Nuevitas. Two officers who, from their talk, they discovered were going as far as Cardenas, sat just across the aisle from them. They were eating pineapples and laughing. One of them held up a knife.

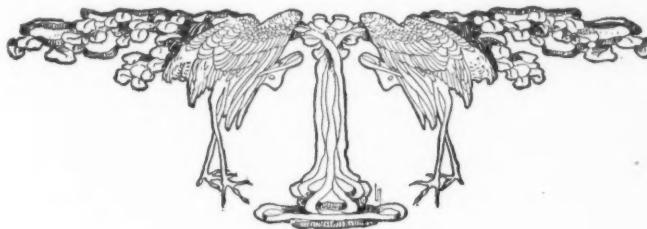
"This belonged to Marsh," he said

and Lucy grew rigid at the name. She waited for the next words, and she could feel Pierre, beside her, waiting, too. "I took it away from him one day when he was drunk. I always felt he'd come to an end like that. Spaniards, the lowest of them, won't stand insults. Marsh had the most abusive vocabulary, and took a delight in rubbing it into every Spanish mother's son of them—telling them how they'd been 'licked.'"

"Oh, yes, it must have been the work of some sneaking Spaniard," said the other.

"Positively. Marsh had more enemies among them than any other man in the regiment. They don't take any chances, and that hill over the Yumuri is always lonely. No open fight for them. They just pick you out quietly from up a tree, and—*ping!*—fill you calmly and politely with lead." There was a pause. "That's the fourth soldier in three months found just that way—and not a hint of any sort to clear up the mystery."

Pierre's hand stole around Lucy's, and in a trembling, intense pressure their satisfied hearts spoke to each other.



RESPONSE

A CROSS the years—a boundless wild
With wastes of sea—
The Child is calling to that child
Who once was me.

Far voices on far silence break,
Old echoes float
Up long forgotten paths and wake
A life remote.

I see in visions dim, distinct,
The past reborn,
A flash of pinions interlinked
With rays of morn.

Luxurious clover, thick with dew,
A faery spell;
And tawny woods to wrestle through
Where wizards dwell.

I walk the mountains fresh and wild,
I snap my bonds;
And when you call, O little Child,
A child responds.

ETHEL ROLT WHEELER.

TACKHAMMER & HURLBURST

By Marion Hill

IF ever there was a nice little girl, a promising actress, a through-and-through "straight" young soul, it was Truly May. She was an admitted credit to the "Fighting Parson" Company, which, though it drew splendid houses, and played whole week-stands at good theaters in big towns, was composed of artists who cared more for going a joyous pace than a steady one—and had a wide, red, rapid reputation in consequence. They were quite proud of the lurid aura in which they traveled, and in each new town strove to take a few more auto rides, open more bottles, wear more flowers, see more sights, and partake of later suppers than they did in the last. While they considerably kept on their feet and refrained from plunging into the scandal gulf, they nevertheless teetered on the edge with an unconcern so astonishing as to be almost commendable.

Of course, Candia Ransome made a second exception in the way of stability, but was not necessarily marvelous thereby, for she was both middle-aged and fat—and, for such, staidness is far more largely a matter of fate than selection.

But it was different with Truly May. She had beauty, and in extravagant measure, of the most appealing type; and her youth was extreme enough to have served as an excuse for many a misconception concerning ethical values, for she was only seventeen. Yet, after all, youth is its own protection. There is nothing more sternly moral. There

is a lot said about the "mistakes of youth," when those mistakes belong indisputably to beings who have outgrown youth's guardianship, but who lack the courage to accept the responsibilities of a lately acquired maturity along with its opportunities.

Youth has stern standards. Truly May owned them all, and flourished them. She certainly did her innocent best to get herself heartily disliked by the "Fighting Parson" Company; and the fact that they loved and guarded her instead is decidedly in their favor.

They were not only loyally protective to her to her face, but behind her back, which is vastly more to the purpose—and not one of them ever voiced a discovery that became rather painfully patent to them all—that Truly May was childishly and pathetically in love with "Tack-hammer" Hurlburt, the *Fighting Parson* himself.

There was only one person who did not believe in the state of affairs—they being too aboveboard to be easily credible—and that person was bluff Johnny Banks, the carpenter. He therefore attempted to be facetious one day.

His first mistake was to tap Truly May affectionately on the shoulder to get her attention. He got it; also her disapprobation. She hated to be touched.

"Take a fool's advice and make love to me," he offered cordially. "Don't waste good eyes on Tack."

"What are you talking about?" she asked coldly. "And don't swear, please, when you speak to me." For Johnny Banks guilelessly used damns for capitals and punctuation-marks. It was a matter over which he had no control.

So young she was, so pretty, that her displeasure was as ineffectual as a kitten's. Johnny roared with laughter.

"I'm talking about handsome Tack; you're too sweet on him."

"I'm nothing of the sort," she flashed, betraying by her denial all that she would have covered up by admitting.

"And he's married, all right!"

"I know it," she interrupted, drawing more coldly still upon her tactless young dignity. Then in a wistful little undertone she said: "But, Johnny, Mr. Hurlburt and his wife are separated, aren't they?"

"Separated!" snorted Banks. "Separated like—like—like two panels to one scene; waitin' for a jolt to knock 'em together. I know."

"What vulgar words you use," she commented, walking disdainfully away.

"Don't I?" he yelled amiably after her. "But it wouldn't have been so vulgar if I'd said 'biff 'em apart,' would it?"

After Johnny Banks' anything but veiled hints, Truly May became more shy than ever when in Hurlburt's society. All along, her blushing avoidance of him had been a large factor in her self-betrayal, and now it increased distressingly. There was no one who could help her very much but Hurlburt himself; so he did it. The opportunity came during the next period of travel.

Bored by a long day on a Pullman car, Truly May, who disliked cards, never wanted to sleep, and did not happen to have anything to read, started down the aisle to hunt for occupation. Her young moods were always divided between freezing dignity and a comfortable, kittenish allurement. Under the abandonment of the latter, she curled herself up beside a reader whom she momentarily mistook for the juvenile man, and said coaxingly:

"Be a good boy, Tommy, and let me have a smell of the book, too."

She laid her dusty pink palm over the page.

Hurlburt, who held the book, smiled a little, questioningly, as he offered it.

"It happens to be in French," he said. "Do you read that criminal tongue?"

Pale and red by turns, and already on her feet endeavoring to get away, Truly May stammered her explanation:

"I thought it was Tommy Teneyke—I did not know—I wouldn't have—"

"Mighty poor compliment to me, throwing down my charms for Tommy's," said Hurlburt, putting his detaining hand on hers. He smiled at her again. If intended to restore her to indifference, the smile was a failure. Women older and wiser than Truly May found it hard to be adamant under the charm of its friendliness.

"I want to go, really," flamed Truly May, trying to free her hand.

"No, you don't," said Hurlburt quietly. "Sit down and I'll read to you."

"I don't understand French," disclaimed she, still standing.

"Too bad—sometimes, not always, I admit. This particular story is very harmless. It tells of a pair of middle-aged lovers—a wise old count and a countess, who is still wiser. She has just advised him to call upon her less frequently. 'Why?' he has asked. 'Because my young daughter is falling in love with you,' she replies. 'You deceive yourself, dear lady; she leaves a room the minute I enter it,' he protests. 'That is how I know,' confides the wise old countess."

"Oh," said Truly May. The color went from her face. She was on guard and courageous. Lifting her fringe of lash, she looked at him with gentle steadiness.

"Go on translating," she faltered, and sat down beside him.

"I'd sooner talk English—with you," he said laughingly, throwing the book aside.

Skilled in the intricacies of defensive conversation, he soon had her chatting with her usual unconcern; and he strengthened the courage of her shy glances by meeting them with smiling frankness. But whenever she looked long away from him, his eyes became grave with a comprehending chivalry which forbade him to be amused. Moreover, to any one but Johnny Banks, the practical, Truly May was entirely too pretty to be amusing. To every man,

and to every woman, too, she presented an elusive ideal that commanded admiration and respect.

"As a charmer you exceed even Tommy," she said, finally rising to go; "for is not this where we get off? Indeed, you have made the end of the journey fly very pleasantly, Mr. Hurlburt."

The "Mr. Hurlburt" touched him exceedingly.

"I wish you wouldn't," he said, almost roughly. "Why don't you call me 'Tack,' the way the others do?"

"Oh," she said again. And again she paled. The lessons were hard.

He unwisely repented.

"Truly—dear—I—" he began impulsively. Then he stopped; he was startled to discover that even while he was endeavoring to make the girl get over her affection for him, his one fear was that he might succeed. He thankfully welcomed the town to which they were coming. "All good little girls should have their hats and coats on," he admonished, waving her glance toward its rapidly clustering houses.

"All right, Tack, I'll hurry," she promised. In just such awed cadence she would have called England's king "Edward"—upon royal command.

That night, in the dressing-room which she and Candia shared, Truly May asked suddenly:

"Why do they call him that?"

"Call *who what?*" demanded Candia, unnecessarily explosive. She was generally the best-tempered of mortals, but, like all fat people who want to be thin, she grew rabid when dressing.

"Mr. Hurlburt, 'Tack.'"

Truly May was made up; and most awfully pretty she looked, too.

Candia took time about answering; she was methodically "winking" her light-colored and sparse eyelashes upon a blackening stick.

"Why, it's stuck to him," she finally explained. "It happened two or more years ago. He was in a fierce show—something rotten; salary *never* got around—yet Hurlburt kept spruce-looking as ever—trousers creased every morning. Then the boys got on to it. He carried a tack-hammer in his grip,

heated the head over the gas, and—bless your heart!—got down on his knees and ironed his trousers daily. Wouldn't that loosen your roots? It's been 'Tack' ever since. He thinks a great deal of appearances. Well, I don't blame him for being vain; he's a nice-looking chap."

"He has more than good looks; he has beauty," said Truly May, with conviction. "Men can't be called 'beautiful,' I suppose; but it is the only word for—Tack."

Candia, dressed and controlled, glanced keenly at the dreaming girl.

"Um. If he's 'beautiful,' you're not the first to find it out," she said, more kindly than the words sounded. "I suppose you know he's married?"

From a pensive vestal, Truly May turned into a small fury.

"Of course I know it!" she stormed. "Why are you all reminding me of Tack's wife? I'm sick of the sound of her!"

"So's Tack, from the look of things," said Candia, laughing with fat abandon. A joke was always a joke, even if not true. Then with a yearning sigh she cried: "I'm that thirsty, I'd give worlds for a glass of beer!"

"Candia, dearest!" urged Truly May reprovingly. "You ought not to say such things; such vulgar things! People who don't know you might think you were in earnest."

"They might. That's true. I'll be careful," mumbled Candia, choking mysteriously. "I'll be back in a minute."

"Do you know, dear," she confided to the leading woman, in whose dressing-room she was imbibing the coveted refreshment, "that little girl is the trial of my life. You can't guess what I suffer."

"Indeed I can," coolly responded her hostess. "The weird little crank caught me at my toddy the other night, and she immediately applied a hot water-bag to my feet and a cold compress to my forehead, thinking that nothing but illness could account for the medicine. I ought to have slapped her about her business—but I couldn't."

"Hoodooed!" here gasped Candia, her thoughts far from Truly May, her eye on a bunch of peacock's feathers which blastingly decorated the star's dressing-room.

That lady promptly poled them down and poked them through the doorway. She looked thoroughly apprehensive. "What triple idiot could have put them there?" she demanded.

"The overture is on," announced Candia gloomily, "to a half-empty house, and nearly all paper at that. We're in for bad luck. Well, it's the end of the season, and what could we expect? I've never closed yet with money enough to keep me through the summer—so why should I hope to this trip?"

"And Tack is worried about his throat—says it doesn't feel right."

"Nor mine," ejaculated Candia, tenderly feeling that fat locality.

Their fund of gloom exhausted, they both broke into gay laughter and separated.

That night's business was certainly poor. They all talked about it a great deal the next morning at breakfast, in the big empty dining-room, deserted finally even by the waiters, to whom this warmed-over, ten-o'clock horror was the affliction of their lives.

Truly May's youth never shone brighter than at the breakfast-table. Among her faintly faded companions she glowed as freshly as a rose. Her morning spirits were always gay, too, and provoked the denunciation of her more jaded yokefellows.

"You don't seem to care whether we close or not, do you?" asked Teneyke.

"Not a bit: it will give me more time to study."

"Manners or grammar?"

"Shakespeare."

"Going to be a 'legit'?"

"If I can."

"But you can't," yelled Johnny Banks from the end of the table, wagging a peremptory finger in her direction. "Nobody young enough to *look* Shakespeare has brains enough to read the lines."

"That's fairly true," agreed Hurlburt,

laughing radiantly and helplessly at the black defiance which was gathering on Truly May's face. "After mastering the text, an actress always has both feet in the grave."

"Mine aren't," denied Truly May indignantly; "and I know nearly all the plays by heart."

"Turn on the spout and let us sample the stream," begged Teneyke, as if faint with thirst.

"Well, I will," cried Truly May, teased into excitement, like the child she was. Sweeping away the dishes before her, to make a space for her mutinously planted elbows, she commenced to recite, keeping her clear, honest eyes on every laughing face in turn.

Under her frankly lovely gaze, the laughter immediately died, and a shocked amazement slowly took its place—for Truly May's scene was one whose outspoken vulgarity is so in excess of its beauty that it is generally omitted, even in its expunged state, as given in the acting edition. As the girl went on, her exquisite voice lingering upon the music of the verse, her listeners grew still more startled, for it became evident that she was reciting not from the acting edition, but from the scholar's—which is almost unreadable, certainly unspeakable, in a mixed society.

But not the shadow of a distrust appeared on her mobile face to show that she came within a hundred miles of realizing the terrible unfitness of what she was repeating. And, indeed, she was that far away, and farther. There could be no doubt of it. Yet to the others the situation was as uncomfortable as it was intense and unusual. They were aching for her to finish, and yet were fairly terrified to contemplate the pause. But it came.

"There!" concluded Truly May exasperatedly. "Is that enough?"

The only possible reply seemed to lie in a rattle of meaningless laughter. If it were allowed to come, Hurlburt felt sure that it would force a suspicion through the armor of Truly May's almost incredible innocence, and he did not intend to be around when that time came. Hardly had she flung her ques-

tion, than he had reached across the table and taken her two hands congratulatingly within his own.

"It was wonderfully done, little girl," he said, with the gentle earnestness of complete sincerity. "It has been a—a lesson to all of us."

"You bet," mumbled Johnny Banks, shooting from the table. And in a swift disbandment, the incident was allowed to close.

Perhaps to offset this discretion, or maybe to even up for the run of bad luck which indubitably set in, the "Fighting Parson" Company began to hunt around for something cheeringly audacious to do.

"We haven't been to The Tamaracks yet," suggested young Nevins, a blond baby of a boy, who generally set the pace.

The Tamaracks was—well, it was The Tamaracks. Perfectly proper, of course, but deliciously sporty. It was delightfully out of town, and you went there in an auto, after the performance, and you were entertained in a brilliant variety of ways, and you got back home in time for breakfast—for which you were not hungry, having been fed.

"You can take me, Nev, if you want," seconded the leading woman.

"I want," agreed Nevins.

And here spoke up Miss Joy Devine, who sang "The Holy City" in the "Fighting Parson's" cathedral scene.

"Keep a little cozy corner in your tonneau for me, Banks."

"Sure thing," he cordially promised.

Overhearing several of these companionable conversations, Truly May became desirous of joining the party, and therefore sought out Hurlburt.

She found him a prey to a lonely mood, which inclined him to be very tractable.

"Have you anything 'on' for to-night, Tack?" she asked.

"No," he answered, showing unfeigned pleasure at her approach. "Why?"

"Well, then, will you—will you——"

"Will I——?" His voice encouraged her. His heart was responding in advance to whatever she might ask.

"Will you drive me to The Tamaracks to-night?"

For a moment his mind temporized—why not?—the long, rushing ride under the glitter of stars, the unvexed companionship—But then the songs, the dances, the wine!

"Will you, Tack?" begged she, softly insistent.

"No!" he said, with fierce suddenness. He abruptly walked away.

"And what in the world is the matter, Truly May?" asked Candia, a little later. "What made you cry?"

"Tack has been rude to me," faltered the girl.

"How?" demanded Candia. Her eyes blazed. Things promised ill for Tack.

And Truly May told of his refusal.

After an immense sigh of relief, Candia turned indignantly upon her young protégée.

"Truly May, if it were left to me, I'd sooner be fast than a fool; it's safer," she puffed, fanning herself furiously.

"I'm not a fool!" cried the suspect, with dignity. Then humbly: "Am I?"

"Ask Tack!" sniffed Candia sarcastically.

"He's here to ask," said Hurlburt, at the door. "May I come in?"

"You're very putty colored," criticized Candia. "Aren't you well?"

"Not top notch," he confessed.

Truly May radiantly accepted this as an excuse for his recent "rudeness." Then her face clouded sympathetically.

"I'm so sorry—if you are ill," she said.

His faintly smiling glance answered and thanked her.

Candia Ransome was soon fussing methodically over him, counting his pulse, taking his temperature with a clinical thermometer, and shaking her head doubtfully.

"I'll have you moved into the room which communicates with mine, so as to look after you," she decided. "Your voice will be gone by to-night, and it's dollars to doughnuts that the manager closes the show!"

When a card house starts to tumble, it is soon flat. That night's perform-

ance—gotten through with somehow—was the last. In the morning, the *Fighting Parson* was without a shred of his splendid voice, and was down with tonsilitis. Candia Ransome was rapidly wheezing herself into the same condition. Truly May, with calm immovability, told the manager she intended to withdraw from the company to take care of them both. With three gone from the cast, and the end of the season near, the dates were canceled and the troupe was disbanded.

Afraid of possible contagion, the home-goers mostly wrote their condoling adieus to the sufferers. All but Johnny Banks. He called upon Hurlburt in person, and offered a suggestion—or started to.

"Say, Tack, old chap," he volunteered somewhat nervously. "Hadn't I better send for—for"—even his bluff courage was not quite equal, under the dangerously forbidding blaze from Hurlburt's eyes, to bring out the words—"your wife."

"A doctor?" suggested Hurlburt intensely. "Thanks. I have."

Banks' answer cannot go down. It was one word, hot. Then he went.

"And now, Truly May," panted Candia, "here's Tack's money and here's mine. I guess it's you to run the box-office for a while!"

"Don't worry about a thing; I'll take care of you—both."

And she did. The doctor, adjudging her worthy, trusted her with the full charge of his cases.

"You'll pull them through," he encouraged her as he left; "but you'll have to get along without much sleep for a few nights."

"I don't want *any*," was Truly May's solemn assurance.

"Put on my kimono and be as comfortable as you can," moaned Candia.

"Kimonos are indecent," announced the girl.

"As if I'm not sick enough without being called indecent," wept Candia.

"I didn't say you. I said kimonos. And they are," insisted Truly May, without flinching. She was getting into a long, madonna-blue wrapper,

which came up to her ears and down to her knuckles, and against which her braided hair fell in heavy ropes. She looked more of a child than ever.

"Isn't it late in the day to be prudish?" sobbed Candia. She had very much given up. "I've seen you every night in a ball-gown that wasn't more than a strap."

"Business is one thing; indecency another."

"Not with us," cackled Candia, changing her woe into an unregenerate mirth, and shaking her cot with it.

Truly May refused to smile. She was too busy. To be ill in a hotel is bad enough, indeed, for the patient, but it is even worse for the attendant. However, this particular little attendant soon had the bell-boy enlisted in her cause—which is a great deal. His name was Binky—no one knew why. She called him into her room and pointed tragically to Candia prone upon one cot, and, through the communicating door, to Hurlburt on another.

"Binky, I'll need a lot of help."

"You'll get it, miss."

"Guests are not allowed to do cooking in the rooms, are they, Binky?"

"Not under any circumstances, miss."

"And I need an alcohol-stove and a few pans and dishes, Binky."

"I'll smuggle them in, miss, and I won't see them ever again."

She handed him five dollars, which he tried to refuse.

"It's his," said Truly May, nodding toward Hurlburt. "Do all you can for him."

So Binky took the money reluctantly. The braids and the blue wrapper were enough for *him*.

The siege was a wearying one, though it lasted less than two weeks. By that time the invalids were on the road to recovery. After the manner of men, the better he grew the more exacting Hurlburt became. Moreover, equally in the manner of men, he fancied himself hopelessly in love with his nurse. It was more than fancy; he *was*. And finally a midnight came when Truly May was too tired to humor and joke him. She did the worst possible

thing; she took the situation as seriously as he.

"You have saved my life, little girl," he whispered.

"No; only taken care of it, Tack."

"Oh, come closer," he fretted irritably. "Don't sit over there."

So she came obediently near and knelt down beside him.

"Having saved my life, you own it; it belongs to you; it really does."

"Please hush," begged Truly May, glancing at the other room.

"Is Candia better?"

"Much better. She is sleeping."

"Then she doesn't need you now; and I do. I always do. I always shall. I must have you."

A terrifying happiness surged through Truly May, and shone in her wondering eyes.

"Must you, Tack?" It was really all she could find to say.

"Yes, I must. I have thought so often about it—lying here. You have been so sweet and good, Truly May. You are the kind to stick to a fellow through everything. That's the only kind that counts. Don't ever leave me. Dear girl, put your hands in mine."

Without resistance, almost eagerly, she put her small hands in his, and bent her head to listen.

"Oh, I'm such a lonely fellow, Truly May. If you only knew. But I'm not lonely now. I have you. Haven't I, Truly?"

"Yes," she said solemnly. It seemed very beautiful—being so dearly loved.

"If you mean that, kiss me!"

With all her sweet, frightened soul in her eyes, the ecstasy of the willing martyr there, too, tired little Truly May was bending quietly forward to give the first unworthy kiss of her life, when she stopped—catching startled sight of Candia's feeble, kimonoed bulk which had crawled weakly to the middle door and was leaning against it.

"Truly May," croaked the apparition, "get up. You're kneeling in a thorough draft, child—and God knows where it might not blow you to. Get up. And, Tack, if you have a glimmer of sense left, pull that blanket up to

your chin and stop breezing your arms about. And if you'll kindly wipe that velvety look out of your lying eyes, dear boy, so much the better for everybody's health all 'round. Truly May, didn't I tell you to get up? And get out of here, too?"

"Oh, I can't leave him—suffering. Look at him, Candia!"

"Those are not tears, child. It's—it's influenza—I've given him cold feet. Go on. I'll attend to him."

Left alone with the convalescent, Candia's ministrations were unique. She looked at him and looked. Then she kept on looking. Finally, like a small boy who has done wrong, Hurlburt put his hands over his eyes to shut out the sight of her.

"Humph!" she muttered sternly. "Still feel as if there were anything you wanted, Tack?"

"No."

"I thought not. Good night, dear boy. If you change your mind, call me."

Crawling back to her own apartment, she appealed wearily to her young companion.

"Will you fix my pillows, dearie?"

"I won't," said Truly May, clenching her hands. "I hate you."

"Do you, dear?" asked Candia wistfully. Two big tears forced themselves from between her eyelids and rolled to her cheeks. "I suppose you do."

"No," falteringly. "I don't quite hate you, but—— What made you, Candia? What made you interfere?"

"Because Tack loves just one woman, and that's his wife."

"Tack loves *me!*!" contradicted Truly May fiercely. She childishly insisted upon being bad.

"As we all do, dearie, and a little better, I'm bound to admit. Tack's but human, I guess, for all he's a nice chap. If men can't get what they want, they'll take what they can get, Truly May, and we mustn't judge them, dearie, for, not being built that way, we don't know anything about it."

"If Tack wants his wife, why isn't she here?" demanded the girl hotly.

"Instead of me? *I've* taken care of him. Why isn't *she* here?"

"Because he's too proud to send for her."

"Knowing she wouldn't come!" scoffed Truly May.

"Knowing she'd be *sure* to come."

"She loves him?"

"Most faithfully and dearly."

"Then you are a wicked, bad, old woman," pronounced Truly May.

Candia fairly reeled.

"Me?"

"You."

"Why?"

"For not wiring her long ago."

Going to the desk, Truly May found an address among Hurlburt's belongings, found also a telegraph-blank, and scribbled a message. Then she vehemently rang until the sleepy Binky appeared.

"You rush this!" she ordered furiously. All creation was under her displeasure. But when Binky had scuttled away on his errand, her face relaxed into tenderness and its usual glory of sympathetic goodness.

"I want to tell Tack," she cried pleadingly.

Candia waved her toward his room. Creeping to his couch, Truly May knelt down again beside him and gently pulled his hands from his still-covered face.

"Tack!"

"Go away."

"Listen, dear."

"Go away!"

"You won't feel lonely any more, dear. Your wife is coming."

His brilliant eyes flashed open, and for a radiant moment sought the dim spaces of his apartment. Then they clouded somberly.

"Oh, Truly May," he murmured, "I deserve scorn from you, little girl, but I didn't expect it."

"Scorn, nothing, Tack! She is coming. I've telegraphed; and signed your name."

"You've—"

"Telegraphed? Yes, Tack."

"And signed—"

"Your name, dear.. She'll come."

"Don't look at me, Truly May," he choked, flinging away her hands, and hiding his face in the cushions. "I want to thank you, but I—I—can't. Don't look at me, I say!"

THE MUSIC OF THE PINES

HEAR the music of the pines,
As green boughs in waving lines
Rise and fall in cadence sweet
'Neath the quick wind's nimble feet;
Deep notes swell and gently die
In a boundless threnody.

Saddened music! With thy wail
Nature opens wide the veil,
Sings of days when worlds were born,
When the stars from suns were torn,
When the water and the land
Waited for the Lord's command.

Mystic music! Could the soul
Grasp each impulse, and control
Words to make each meaning known,
Reap the thoughts thy notes have sown;
Then the mind would hold the key
To vast nature's mystery.

KENNETH BRUCE.

The GUARDIAN AT THE GATES

By Arthur

Stringer

T was a gray day. Crombie paced the wet deck of the *Dravonia*—paced it with that grimly, incongruously feverishness of movement into which sheer listlessness can sometimes flower. The huge liner and all it held, swinging there in the outer harbor of Gibraltar, lay blanketed in the humid and disheartening heaviness of the levanter that had followed at their heels, from Tunisian littoral and Algerian coast, right on to the Rock itself.

The pacing figure, touched into some untimely youthfulness by the close-fitting blue-and-gold Cunarder uniform, stopped only once, at the rail amidships, to gaze abstractedly down at the twelve hundred huddled lives of the lower steerage-deck, at the crowded yet unrelated groups of Hungarian and Russian peasants over whom, for the time being, he stood guardian. Then he turned away wearily, and peered out at the dark and sullen line of the African coast. He watched the fine and almost imperceptible rain drift down and screen off the blurring mass of the Morocco hills, and then shut out the yellow-green slopes of Spain, still dappled with sunlight beyond Algeciras, and then lower its universal gray curtain before the frowning galleries of the sentinel Rock, and envelope the town and the wharves and the still nearer shipping. Suddenly the somber liner and its lives seemed to lie there, ensiled in an isolating and limitless emptiness.

He himself was as old as Africa, was the thought that went through the pacing surgeon's mind, as listlessly he heard the officer's whistle; the muffled call of voices from the bridge, the clank

and whine of the straining anchorables. That meant they were getting under way, leading eastward and for the Atlantic once more. And movement was better than nothing.

It was then, as he wheeled about on the deserted deck, that he first caught sight of her. She had come out to the ship alone, at the last moment, rowed by a barefooted Spanish boatman. She had crept aboard with no word or warning to signal her approach, emerging from the engulfing mist as unheralded as though she had winged her way there, spiritlike, from unknown and alien worlds.

She painted a little, as she followed her boxes up the wet ship's ladder, clinging to the sodden coat-sleeve of the young officer who had scurried down to the landing-platform at her first bewildered call. It seemed both a symbol and a reminiscence, that flying descent of the young officer; she had, in some way, always held men at that quietly imperious call.

Crombie noticed that she was dressed all in gray. Her eyes, too, seemed the same quiet and brooding gray. Even the soft oval of her face, through the minute, warm rain that now shrouded everything, seemed gray, a wan and whitish gray that sent a vague spear of apprehension through him. But he watched her, after the first startled and involuntary catch of his breath, without a motion and without a sign. And if she, in turn, saw and realized the figure not twelve paces away from her, no token of it escaped her, as the other's eyes followed her familiarly half-hesitating figure as it crossed the deck and disappeared into the deeper shadows of the companionway.

Then, with a passionate compression

of the jaw-muscles on either lean temple, and an almost convulsive upthrust of each shoulder, he turned on his heel and plunged below-stairs, into the thick of the crowded and huddled humanity that could still leave him so keenly and ironically alone, segregated there with the tumult of his own stampeding thoughts.

For the woman who had come up the ship's ladder, out of the fog that seemed to leave all the rest of the world phantasmal and far away, was his divorced wife.

In life, then, he told himself, even the widest divergent circles must some time and somewhere impinge. For it was she, the small and seemingly suppliant figure in gray, the centralized yet fragile embodiment of all those unforgettably unforgettable forces which had once hurled him like a lost star into the very outlands of space, which had once wrested him from his sober anchorage of material and moral well-being, and left him wandering, derelict-like, along the outer sea-lanes of existence, along the lonelier coasts of endeavor.

She had wrecked his life—that was all he knew, and cared to know. That they should meet, and, above all, meet in such a manner and under such circumstances, had never entered his battling and embittered mind. It was more than preposterous; it was cruel. The sheer fortuitousness of her presence on the same ship with him carried with it a touch of theatricality, it was so appositely inapposite, so ironic in its unpremeditated mésalliance of time and place. That the tides of chance should fling them thus together, after he had given her such a wide berth, after he had given her two continents to herself, made it seem that destiny took some tacit delight in twisting the blade even after it had probed its deepest. It filled him with a sense of being haunted and dogged by fate.

Then he drew himself up suddenly, and asked why he should care, why he could not, as other men would do, school himself to look upon it as a mere contremps of the moment. But some

starved and fugitive feeling, kenned deep in his soul, refused, even at his own command, to creep into the light. She had wrecked his life—that was all he knew, and cared to know.

II.

It was some four hours later, when they were well out in the Atlantic, that Cummings, the English stewardess, came to him with the message that he was wanted by one of the first-cabin passengers. Some wayward and intuitive prompting warned him, even as the words first fell on his ears, from what quarter that call was to come.

"Who is the passenger?" he asked, nevertheless, turning to the woman in the doorway.

"It's the lady who came aboard alone, sir, at Gibraltar!"

For one moment of silence he looked at the blank white walls of the room, with studious and unseeing eyes. Then he turned and followed the stewardess down the long narrow passageway.

His outward embarrassment, he felt, would be only a thing of the moment. Whatever inner tumult of feeling still surged through him would remain unreleased and inarticulate. His face was a mask; the subjugating and repressional training of that profession which ordained that grave crises must be met impassively and impersonally asserted itself. The only betraying sign, as he stepped through the narrow white door, was the colorlessness of his immobile face.

Then he looked at the woman propped up against the pillows on the narrow berth. The solemn concentration of her eyes, for one fleeting moment, almost put his calmness to rout. Then his part came back to him once more, and he stooped a little toward her. The movement was one of silent interrogation.

"It's too bad to trouble you," she began evenly, although her eyes still studied his thin and impassive face.

For answer, he took the wrist that lay weakly over the berth side.

"It's too bad, I know," she repeated,

with her gray smile and her quiet, even voice. "But I'm afraid I'm rather ill!"

His eyebrows went up as he counted the crazy pulse.

"Yes, you are, rather," he answered, as he took out his clinic thermometer.

Muffled and far away the ship's bell sounded; some one, passing down the companionway, burst into a peal of laughter. After a minute of unbroken silence he read the thermometer. He read it with still unbetraying eyes, but as he did so he wondered what, in this case, would take the place of that graduated jocularity down which he could so often usher a patient into the abysmal darkness of vast and impending danger. There was no longer, he knew, any menace of emotionalism in their meeting; there could now be no subversive side issues. Some sudden yet nameless transformation of spirit crept over him as he looked from the tiny glass tube to the pale ivory of her skin; and for the first time he found courage to study the shadowy gray eyes, still watching his face.

"Don't be afraid to tell me—anything," she said.

"How long have you suffered this way?" he parried.

She pushed her tumbled hair back with one white hand.

"For nearly a month. It was first at Madrid, I think; then at Granada; and at Algeciras a Spanish doctor wanted to operate. But I put it off."

"Why did you put it off?"

He watched her studious face, but it seemed inscrutable to him.

"You know how I always put off everything," she answered, with the ghost of a smile he remembered from other years.

There, he told himself fiercely, was the reiterated note; there was the old, insistent trait of her character—to toy, carelessly and smilingly, with the profundities of life. She was almost laughing in the face of what lay before her, in the shadow of what lay behind her. It wrung from him his next blunt question.

"But did no one tell you what it meant—this putting it off?"

Her fingers toyed with the white coverlet.

"Yes, they did, but still I put it off."

She looked at him suddenly, with wide-eyed solemnity.

"*Is it too late?*" she demanded quietly.

Her wan tranquillity seemed to drape everything about him in a veil of unreality. It seemed to challenge brutal plain speaking, to shock her into some due knowledge of the grim truth.

"That's what I've got to find out!" he blurted out.

She turned her head slowly.

"You mean that you must operate?"

"Even *that* I've got to find out!"

There was a moment's silence.

"I can trust you," she said, with the ingenuous directness of a child.

The momentary tremulousness of her voice—for his eyes were averted from her face—pierced him with a needle of sublimated anguish. He turned suddenly to the door to shield his confusion, and called to the stewardess, who still waited outside.

"Cummings, go to the steerage dispensary and tell Doctor Kaposvar to look after the obstetrical case in the midships ward. I'll be busy here for an hour."

The mask, by this time, was readjusted, the part remastered. When he turned to the narrow berth, he saw not a woman, but a wan and broken body; a frail citadel at the gates of which he might have to stand a stern and vigilant sentinel.

III.

It was an hour later that Cummings, returning to the cabin with hot water, heard the woman in the berth say: "Then it ought to be at once?"

"It's *got* to be at once or not at all!" was the surgeon's answer.

"And we're twelve days, you say, in crossing?"

"Yes, twelve, or more. We take the winter route at this season, go south of the Azores, and straight west on a line with Bermuda. That, at least, is something in your favor."

"Then if I could wait for twelve

days," she began hopefully. "I'm not afraid of a little pain—"

"That's just the problem," he broke in. "It *might* be the exception that comes every now and then to prove the rule. You *might* fight it off until you got to New York, into a properly equipped hospital—but, candidly, the chance is only one in a hundred. And it is these chances that surgery dares not take."

She moved her head slowly up and down, as though in perfect comprehension.

"Then why do you hesitate?" she demanded, in her pallid, impersonal way.

Why did he hesitate? Great God! how was he to tell her that? How could he ever hope to make it plain to her, if she could not see it? If she could not understand the stinging cruelty of it all, if she could not comprehend what every moment of such a thing would cost him, or what that terrible and intimate hour had already cost him, how could he lay bare his inmost heart, and dissect it before her studious and disimpassioned eyes?

"I always thought you were a fighter!" she said at last.

It was the first touch of her old spirit. It suggested to him the last shot from a fortress with its ammunition exhausted. It reminded him of that old-time artillery of humor against which he had once found it so hard to make a stand. They were so different, so sharply contradictory in temperament. She had always laughed at his Scottish solemnity, as she used to call it. Yes, it was true that he was a fighter—and she had fought him. Yet if she had only once capitulated, he felt, his will would have been as clay in her hands.

Even now, as his eyes rested on the huddled and slender body, he felt that she was sounding her strongest note of appeal. Through this enforced humility she was acquiring strength. It was in her surrendering helplessness that she lay most powerful. It was, perhaps, the penalty of his dominant and undisciplined strength; for, like all strong men, he could pay tribute only to weakness. Yet she had scorned to stoop to that

immemorial subterfuge; her pride, he knew, had been as strong as his own. Perhaps, after all, she felt more than she expressed—and he winced suddenly at certain wayward memories of her past tendernesses.

He found himself taking her wrist again, without any thought of the ragged pulse that beat under his finger. He wondered why it had always been so hard for him to be honest and outspoken with her.

"Then the longer we wait the—the less chance there is?" she was asking him, bravely enough.

He nodded his head in silent assent. She looked about the little cabin as though taking her last comprehensive view of life.

"Then I would rather you did it—at once!" she told him quietly.

"But why *me*?" he burst out.

The very calmness with which she could thrust him into that arena of anguish, the very heartlessness with which she could confront him with that trial, infinitely more exacting than any ordeal by fire, swept back the tides of pity that had been softening and submerging all those granite memories of the past.

"I would rather it was you," she answered him slowly. "Oh, for so many reasons! Five years ago, when you came back from Vienna—and I said you were so full of airs—Uncle Ezra said you were the most fearless surgeon in New York. And don't you remember I said 'Yes, and the most fearful husband'? And then I'd rather it was over with. I've put it off, and suffered so much, and waited for you so long."

"You waited for me—for this?" he cried, dropping her limp wrist.

She turned to him with a new and deeper studiousness in her eyes. He forced himself to return her gaze, though he was swept by the consciousness that he was being weighed and found worthy, or wanting. Then he flushed painfully, for the pitiful light of commiseration that crept over her face warned him that some unuttered verdict had gone against him.

"But, great God, I am your husband!" he ejaculated.

"You *were* my husband!" she corrected him gently.

That was the truth—he *had* been her husband; all ties and feelings against which he had been foolishly bruising himself were things of the past. These she herself had lost sight of and disregarded—in that alone, he told himself, lay the proof of how little she had felt and known, from the first, of that tangled and tumultuous thing called love, which could be vast and all-consuming while it was rebellious and small; which could move darkly and in strange ways. And there lay his own fault—he had never been honest enough with her.

But now he found himself confronted by the possibility of a grim and ultimate amendment for all those past evasions. She had depolarized and depersonalized herself; and in that, he felt, lay her body's salvation. He saw before him only the small and pallid battle-ground of what would be two fiercely conflicting forces; one ruddy and defensive, one pallid and insidiously beleaguering. And the one he must captain and direct against the other, until at last the field was cleared and the victory lost or won. It was Science before whom he stood now; Science astral-eyed, cold-handed, implacably willed; the unassailed and invulnerable guardian of the flame. She had eliminated the personal equation. He would do it—and do it at once!

He would act as that calm and merciless goddess ordained; it was nothing more than a casual accident of time and place that the pulsing body beside him caged mysteries that made or unmade his world. There would even be involvement and complication, he told himself, but he would cut and intrude ruthlessly, without shrinking and timidity, as that cold and exacting goddess should demand. Then he wondered, in a little panic of apprehension, if he had enough ether on board, and whether or not his new bistuaries had been left behind.

He was thinking, too, how much fairer it might have been, if they were on a regular liner, on a modern and properly equipped ship with a first cabin hospital-room and every con-

venience. As it was, he would have to have the midships dispensary scrubbed down and the operating-table brought up from the steerage ward. As for Kaposvar, he was all but useless; he was so slow and thick-skulled that three cases of tricoma had got past him at Fiume. But Kaposvar could at least help him do the anesthetizing; he could not afford to wear himself out with that mere preparatory labor. And there would be Cummings to attend to the instruments.

"You'll do it?" she asked him, from where she waited on the narrow berth.

"Yes," he answered briskly, but with averted eyes. "To-day—at once!"

IV.

He came back into the cabin, ostensibly to close the port-hole and shut out the heavy fog; in reality, for what might, perhaps, be a valedictory word with her.

"You have friends on board?" he asked, as he stood facing the closed window.

He wheeled about when she did not answer, and looked at her gray face.

"I mean, isn't there somebody here you might like to talk things over with?"

She shook her head.

"Nobody," she answered. Then she was silent.

"You must be brave," he began inadequately, to keep up the front of his rigid self-possession.

"I'm not afraid," she answered again, with wan unconcern.

"But is there no one at home, in New York, to whom you would like word sent? We're equipped with wireless, you know, and any message could be sent along from ship to ship!"

"I'd rather not until it was all over!"

He opened his lips to speak, but remained hesitatingly silent. She was being brave enough; she had won her battle already; it was he himself who had still to try and test his strength. Outside, through the darkening afternoon mist, the fog-horn began to sound

hoarsely. At each slow blast it seemed to tear a hole in the lonely silence.

"Is there anything you can tell me, beforehand, to make me steadier, to make it easier for you, I mean?" she was asking him.

He fought back the words that leaped first to his lips—for that way he knew madness to lie.

"No, I'm afraid there's nothing much; your part is over, you see, when once you've taken the ether!" He smiled down at her confidently, though joylessly. "And you mustn't call us names, afterward, if we don't give you ice-water to drink for a while. You will want it—well, very badly."

"I'll try," she said, a little wistfully. Then she sighed. "After all, we live through the things we're denied, don't we?"

"Have you ever taken ether?" he began again, still temporizing, in the very teeth of his better judgment.

"Yes, once before, at home, when I was thrown in the bridle-path. I thought I was standing on a prairie station platform, and I heard a train rumbling nearer, away off in the distance. Then it came closer and closer, and grew louder and louder. And I remember that the moment it should have flashed past me, on the platform, was exactly the moment I couldn't remember anything more."

The silence that fell over them again was broken by the entrance of the English stewardess.

"Cummings here will help you—er—get ready," he said, with assumed nonchalance.

"That's very good of her," said the woman on the berth gratefully.

Her wide, ruminative gray eyes followed him to the door, where he stopped short.

"And you're sure there's nothing more?" he asked.

"I should like to leave a letter," she answered.

"With me?"

"No, I shall leave it with Cummings," she said deliberately.

He was almost grateful for the pang of cheated rage that swept over him.

It seemed, at one stroke, to divest him of that entangling emotionalism of which he still stood in such vague dread. It was an antidote for his inner tempest of misery; a stern reminder that she was merely the patient and he the surgeon.

He looked at her for the last time, not as a sensate being pulsing with dreams and memories and aspirations, not as a soft and beseeching body of ivory veined with delicate violet; but he looked at her with that terrible impersonal candor with which a chemist might view the fragile glass in which were to mix and contend two grimly antagonistic fluids. Somewhere, he knew, on the cold heights of destiny, the die was already cast; it was already ordained which of those two mysterious forces, life or death, should win the day in that frail shell of flesh.

"You are brave—awfully brave!" he flung out suddenly, with a touch of heat that brought her slow gaze back to him once more.

She smiled at him valiantly as he hurried through the door.

Then she began to braid her hair neatly, in two long ropes that hung heavily down on either side of her white face.

V.

Crombie, pacing the lonely deck in the first gray of the fog-bound morning, still carried on his worn and haggard face the marks of a sleepless night. Yet at the roots of his shadowy, febrile mood of misery stirred some vague and subliminal sense of joy. It was something more than the tangible and material triumph of the operator—for he knew now that with care and watchfulness she would surely live—it was something that lay deeper than the mere knowledge of a stern and crucial task relentlessly and undeviatingly carried out. It was something that taught him that this cryptic thing called consciousness, however schooled and disciplined, was more than cold will and effort; that it was shot through and tangled and complicated with emotion and passion;

with dim but inalienable ecstasies and upgushings of feeling.

She would live; and, although again and again he warned himself that it could mean little or nothing to him, he still wrung his fierce, unreasoning joy from it.

Then still again, with that painful lucidity of thought which marked his feverish wakefulness, he rehearsed the scenes of that terrible two hours of the night before, from her fluttering laugh of "What a bare little room," from the momentary sting of mental anguish, as inapposite as it was unlooked for, when he first lifted the muscles of the pathetically flaccid eyelid and touched the insensate eyeball and made note of the darkened gray of the iris; from the picture of Cummings, in white duck, with her sleeves rolled up, handing the glimmering steel to and from the enameled tray, to Kaposvar, with his great, hairy hand on the smaller, relaxed head, busy with the saturated cap, crying out that he could keep her under no longer; still on to his own defiant declaration that when he was doing the job he would do it right; on to that last outwardly calm but inwardly terrible ten minutes, with Kaposvar growling his guttural warnings to let it go, while he still kept doggedly on, in the teeth of suspended destiny, until he knew he had done what had to be done, until the gray shadows crept over the inert head, and he flung down the knife, and Kaposvar stepped back and wiped the sweat from his face, while he called sharply for the salt solution and prepared for the coaptation sutures, even as the frail sword of life and thought and feeling crept back into what had been the empty sheath of a body. He remembered Kaposvar's relieved grunt of admiration as he threaded the last curved needle; he remembered his sudden, mysterious sense of vast pity for that slender and valiantly battling body, for which it was already out of his power to do more, as he swathed and bandaged and watched the first fluttering sigh of reanimating consciousness.

He felt that they had been kindred and close in that terrible hour; yet with

that sacred rehabilitation she had reasserted her right of a woman, and he fell back, all life fell back, to what it had been before.

Yet his life, during those last years, had been full enough of meetings and partings; he had learned to walk alone; every life, in fact, must learn to go on alone, as isolated and uncompanioned as that lonely ship on which he stood, with its fog-horn calling desolately through the gray emptiness that engulfed it.

He looked at the letter which Cummings had thrust into his hands early that morning as he had sent her to bed with a white face and a trional tablet. He noticed, with widening eyes, that the sealed envelope bore his own name. A moment later he was reading it:

What is before me simplifies everything so much. I don't think I am a coward, any longer, in the face of that truth which you and I have always been so afraid of. I am making it hard for you, perhaps, as once, before you understood, I felt you made it hard for me. But I did this because, through everything, I have always loved you, and I still love you. I have made mistakes, but not the mistakes that you think. You, too, have made mistakes of pride, and silence, and evasion; but all that is over now. If I did not feel so alone, now, so without some one to turn to, I would never tell you this. But, you see, after all I am still a coward.

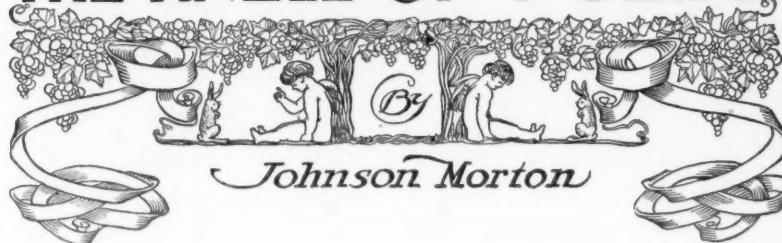
"All that is over now!" He repeated the phrase vacantly, stunned and bewildered by the words before him. Then the glow of a poignant and compelling gratitude crept through all his tired body. His face, illuminated, was turned toward the open sea.

"Oh, thank God!" he cried fervently. "Thank God that she didn't tell me, or I could never have saved her!" For now he knew that the personal equation was once more asserting itself.

Of a sudden, the great ship that plunged on so alone and unaccompanied and engulfed in heavy fog, gave utterance to its lonely call across the Deep. And somewhere out of the silence, unseen and faint and far away, some groping sister ship gave answer to the lonely call.

Then he went below to his wife.

THE KNELL OF POESY



AM thoroughly dissatisfied with my life," declared Mrs. Manton Waring. The tone in which she projected this utterance was so charged with gloom that her husband at once put down the newspaper that concealed his presence to stare at her across the room; but, becoming suddenly conscious of the marked contrast between his wife's appearance and her sentiments, he hastened to raise it again, and to hide his smile behind its friendly shelter.

Mrs. Waring stood leaning against a tall, carved chair; a smart little figure in pale gray. Jewels glittered at her white throat, and a hat, wonderful with green ostrich-plumes, tilted toward her small, straight nose, and shaded her glowing face. Hers was, indeed, the radiant impression of springtime, of youth, of happiness. But when she spoke again, her voice belied it.

"Can't you say something?" persisted she.

"Well, then," asked her husband dutifully from behind his bulwark, "why are you dissatisfied?"

For answer, Mrs. Waring ran toward him. She seized the newspaper with both hands, flung it to the floor, and perched herself on Waring's knee.

"Now you've got to listen," said she. "A whole morning is too much to give to any paper, and if you'd gone to church with your wife as you ought,

you wouldn't be in the mood to make fun of her when she's in need of help and suggestion. It's the sermon that has depressed me so," she explained, as she settled herself comfortably. "It was on 'Obligation,' or something of that sort. Doctor Cotter said that those of us who had much should give much, and so I got to thinking, and I couldn't see that I was of any use at all in the world, and it made me feel so horribly that I could scarcely speak to that nice Mr. Percival Pressy who walked home with me—the one who wears the low collars and the loose ties and writes poetry, I mean. I know he thought I was *dull*, though he was awfully complimentary—and I do *hate* not to seem intelligent when I'm with literary people! Just think, Manton, he's only twenty-four, and he's written over eight hundred poems—he told me so himself—though he hasn't published any yet, because editors now-days are so commercial, and only care for things that please the people who advertise, you know; and what real poet *could* submit to that? Remind me to ask him here, some time—he's a sort of cousin of the Tony Ellerys—because you're so fond of clever people. But all this doesn't help *me*, Manton! I'm not clever, I'm free to confess; but I've made up my mind that I *will* be useful, and I really think that you ought to be interested, and tell me how to begin!"

Waring shook his head and laughed softly. He took both his wife's hands in his. "Gussie," said he, "you're real-

ly the most useful little woman in the whole world! Isn't making me perfectly happy enough of a career for you?"

Mrs. Waring smiled back at him. "Why, of course, dear," she confessed prettily. "It's something—in a way; but it isn't *enough*. You mustn't mind my saying so! I want to be interested in great movements. I want to deal with big issues. I want to be at the head of organizations. I want to serve on committees. Yes; and I want to be a patron of the arts and a leader of society, too. Why, Manton, just think! Although we've been married nearly ten years and I'm over thirty, I've never done a single thing except be happy with you and go to parties! Honestly, when I realize it I'm ashamed. But it's all over now." In her enthusiasm, Mrs. Waring had slipped from her seat and stood facing her husband as she spoke. "This idle, purposeless existence! I'm only waiting for an opportunity to show you what I can do. You'll be proud of your wife yet, Manton!"

"But I'm proud of her now as she is, Gussie," Waring's unregenerate voice replied. "And I don't want you to spoil yourself by getting strong-minded."

"Strong-minded!" Mrs. Waring interrupted reproachfully. "How can you even suggest such a thing? There are plenty of ways in which women may make themselves felt without aping men—history will show you that! Look at all those French women; though I must say most of them weren't very nice, except Joan of Arc, and I'm sure I don't want to wear armor! For pity's sake, Manton, don't carp, of all things, and throw wet blankets—sometimes you remind me of your sister Cynthia. What you *can* do to help me is to tell me how to begin!"

But Waring's attention had turned at the opening of a door. He sprang to his feet. "Let's begin by eating!" he cried flippantly. "Here's Barker come to say that luncheon is ready."

The butler, however, bore a card-tray, which he held out to Mrs. Waring. "A letter that has just been left for madam," he said.

Mrs. Waring pounced upon the

note. "I don't know the writing," she began. Then, as she tore open the envelope, she became absorbed. "The sweetest thing!" At last she looked up at her husband. "You can't imagine what it is! Why, only think, Mr. Percival Pressy has written a poem to *me*—just think, a poem! You know I told you that he said some awfully nice things as we walked down the avenue—why, it's really *wonderful*. Listen, Manton!"

Then she read aloud:

LINES TO MRS. M—— W——
ON EASTER DAY.

(Written in twenty-five minutes.)

Dear Lady, when the Earth I see
Clad in the verdure fresh of Spring,
Lo! it is then there comes to me
The impulse in my heart to sing;
But when my gaze on thee doth fall,
Personifer of the May,
How much more strong th' impulsive call
To join in Nature's roundelay!
The poet's inspiration lies
Not only in the thought of Spring;
But, oh, much more in woman's eyes,
And so to thee I sing!

"Manton, isn't it sweet? So flattering, too! I call it dear of him. And aren't you pleased to have your wife honored like this?"

A moment later as they walked together toward the dining-room, Mrs. Waring stopped suddenly and put her hand on her husband's arm. Her eyes sparkled and her lips were smiling.

"I've *decided*," she exclaimed. "Why, it's really providential! Here was I wondering how to begin being useful, and now it's all perfectly clear. I'm going to help Mr. Percival Pressy publish his volume of poems!"

H.

A few weeks later Mrs. Waring, in the parlance of the society columns, "threw open" her drawing-room for a reading by Mr. Pressy. This plan of action had not, it is true, been of the lady's choosing. Her own methods were all of a more Doric nature. She it was who, soon after her decision and a conference with the poet, arming herself with carefully selected extracts

from Mr. Pressy's pen, had assailed, single-handed, the offices of nearly every publishing house in the city. Her experiences had been varied, but unanimously unfruitful. Save in a few instances, when her personal charms had for one mad instant swayed the editorial caution, she was not permitted to read aloud her samples picked out with such discrimination.

"The Serpent Speaks," a sonnet in syncopated form; "Tell me, O Heart Within This Pensive Breast," and "Rondeau to a Motor-car," which last contained allusions to wireless telegraphy, and had been chosen on account of its timely and up-to-date character.

Indeed, some of the editors had been scarcely polite. One gray-haired veteran had informed her curtly that "poetry was a drug on the market"; while a brutal youngster, grinning coarsely around the cigar in his teeth, had advised her to throw the stuff into the fire, and tell her friend to get to work. It was after the last encounter that Mrs. Waring, in a state of hurt indignation, sent for Mr. Pressy and acknowledged herself defeated, if unconvinced.

The poet heard her recital calmly as he rested his pale, plump face on a pale, plump hand—at times he was forced to cite Byron in extenuation of his own undoubted stoutness.

"It is just as I expected, dear Lavonia," he sighed.

It should be at once explained that, after the established custom of his trade, Mr. Pressy had insisted on renaming his patroness; and to this Mrs. Waring had assented rather guiltily, with the feeling that her new appellation, though it purported to be gratefully remembered as that of some intellectual feminine Mæcenas of Asia Minor, seemed to her to hold an uneasy suggestion of a steamboat!

"Just as I expected," the poet went on. "They are given over to commercialism, these men! They have forgotten art. You will recall, perhaps, my little poem on the subject which begins:

The knell of poesy has sounded.
Is't not the hot pursuit of clanking gold?

"We need never look to such as those for opportunity. We shall find it nearer home among the refined, the cultured, the truly appreciative. Now, it would be my idea"—he looked adoringly at his hostess—"for Lavonia to gather together in her own charming way the choicest spirits of her own choice circle. Then I shall do my modest part by reading some of my little verses, and allowing the listeners to become familiar with them. In this manner"—Mr. Pressy mopped his heated brow as he progressed—"we shall gradually acquire a nucleus which, to speak in metaphor, shall spread in ever-widening circles, until its clarion call demands for the great waiting public the opportunity which at present the hide-bound commercialism of the press denies!"

So Mrs. Waring, convinced by the logic of his suggestion, had embraced his plan with enthusiasm. She made out her list carefully—fashion, breeding, wealth, and the arts should flourish each in its proper quarter. Even the arrival at this time, on a long-threatened visit, of the unknown daughter of an important client of her husband's in the Middle West—a circumstance which promised complications—turned out another asset for success.

Miss Violet McGuinness, of Pomilia, Iowa, proved not only pretty and presentable, but evinced an unexpected interest in all matters pertaining to the arts and their exponents. For poetry, and the poet himself, once she made Mr. Pressy's acquaintance, it soon touched enthusiasm. In the preparations for the "reading" she was of valuable assistance to Mrs. Waring, and her presence at the function was a magnet that drew thither a masculine element whose usual habit is to avoid such entertainments.

Still, it was to her own sex that Mrs. Waring knew she must look for results, and as she stood, at the end of the evening—Miss McGuinness by her side, with the substantial figure of the poet in the background—to receive the thanks and congratulations of her departing guests, she realized that their results had not been meager. So, obe-

dient to her sense of gratitude, she differentiated her salutations in warmth and degree as the line filed past her.

"Good night, Major Pawlet; good night."

"Ah, dear Mrs. Alsop! You want *your* reading on the eighth? So awfully sweet of you. Yes; it was charming, charming. The *eighth*. I sha'n't forget. 'You'll hear from me!'"

"Glad you could come, Mrs. Ellery; good night."

"Do you mind waiting a moment, you dear thing? I want you really to know our poet! Would the twentieth suit you perfectly well? Be frank with me! Your house is *such* a perfect place! Yes; I think it had better be in the afternoon."

"Good night, Cynthia; good night."

"Oh, Mrs. Buttress, you are wonderful, wonderful; but I was *sure* of you! Wasn't the 'Ode to Passion' fascinating? Yes; my friend, Miss McGuinness. Didn't it remind you of Keats, or was it Shelley now? Do you know I sometimes confuse them. Never mind; as I always say, poets are poets! So *dear* of you to undertake a whole series!"

"Good night, Cousin Mary!"

"Good night, Lucy. Too bad you were so late. You missed the very best things."

"Oh, here is Miss Trickey! So glad to meet you. I've heard so much about you. Yes, yes; of *course* you may—newspapers are so helpful—but only a little. I'll trust your taste; only *don't* mention my name any more than you have to. I'm only a very humble instrument. Oh, you're *flattering* me! Haven't you met Mr. Pressy? Oh, *you must!* Percival, please come here!"

"Good night, Brocky. I'm very, very displeased with you! You didn't behave well. Oh, I *saw* you, so don't deny it. Of course I forgive you—but *really!*"

The very last of the guests to leave was an elderly man, whose flowing side-whiskers framed a face of intellectual pallor. Mrs. Waring had noticed him earlier in the evening, an earnest listener and observer as he sat at the back

of the room, and had supposed that he was some acquaintance whose name she did not happen to remember. Now as he approached her—by this time she was standing quite alone at the door of the drawing-room—she realized that she did not know him. His low bow and air of pleasing diffidence were effective. Mrs. Waring smiled hospitably, and held out her hand. As he pressed it the gentleman spoke.

"My dear madam," said he, "I owe you many deep apologies, for I must confess to being an interloper—" His wide smile disclosed even rows of all-too-perfect teeth. "But you will pardon me, I'm sure, when I announce myself the friend of talent, glad to smooth, with helping hand, the path of every young traveler up the hill of fame."

Mrs. Waring looked puzzled.

"In other words, madam, let me introduce myself as Mr. Johnson—Mr. Boswell Johnson—odd connection of names, isn't it? A publisher of the firm of Johnson & Co., and let me explain. My friend, Miss—"

But Mrs. Waring waved aside all excuses. The word "publisher" was potent!

"Oh, that isn't at all necessary!" she cried. "I'm delighted to see you. Weren't the poems that Mr. Pressy read us *dear*? Didn't you *love* 'Dead in the Desert'? I think that passage that begins, 'I took you apart in the gloaming,' is most touching. So glad you could hear it all."

"It is in regard to Mr. Pressy and his poems that I would like to speak with you," Mr. Boswell Johnson went on. "His work evidently attracts a good deal of attention." Mr. Johnson's eye seemed to count the groups of chairs. "To speak plainly, it occurs to me that we might hit upon some plan for bringing out the poems in book form."

Mrs. Waring was unable to conceal her delight. "Come right into the library," she urged. "We shall be by ourselves there, and I'll send for Mr. Pressy at once."

But Mr. Johnson shook his head.

"Pardon me," he interrupted, as he looked at his watch, "I'm afraid I can't stop to-night. I'm late already. You see I'm off for the West to-night on business. I'm taking a midnight train. Sha'n't be back for ten days or so. But if we may arrange a meeting then, dear Mrs. Waring, I shall be glad. Meanwhile, you may broach the subject to our young friend, and, if it is convenient, perhaps we can see one another here. Shall we say a fortnight from to-night?"

"Yes; a fortnight from to-night at nine o'clock!"

Mrs. Waring's assent was eager, and her smile, as Mr. Johnson left her, fairly triumphant.

But, when she turned in search of the poet, he was not to be found. She looked in vain through the drawing-room, library, and hall. Suddenly she caught sight of him in a small conservatory that opened out of the dining-room. He was sitting on a little green seat with Miss Violet McGuinness.

"Children, children," Mrs. Waring's voice called gaily, "I've such a piece of good news to tell you!"

III.

"I am thoroughly disillusionized," said Mrs. Manton Waring. Her husband, wakened by her sharp knock at his door, sat up in bed to blink in the sudden flare of light that had followed her entrance.

"What's the matter?" he demanded anxiously. "Bad dream, burglars, or are you ill?"

Mrs. Waring smiled enigmatically.

"No, it's *much* worse, Manton!"

A clock on the mantel struck midnight. She perched herself on the edge of his bed. "I've just got to tell you, for otherwise I shouldn't sleep a wink," she declared.

Waring settled himself comfortably on his pillow. "Fire away!" said he.

His wife needed no urging.

"You may remember that I told you just before you went off to your meeting after dinner that to-night was the

time appointed for our interview with Mr. Johnson, the publisher, you know, who was so anxious to print Percival Pressy's poems. Well, everything was all arranged. We'd gone over the poems a hundred times, and only this afternoon Mr. Pressy'd brought them here himself, all typewritten by that nice Miss Larkin in your office, and promised to come back soon after nine.

"I really wanted to see Mr. Johnson alone at first, and it was all quiet and peaceful because Violet McGuinness, as you know, had gone to dine with Cousin Mary Dolliver, who was alone. Manton Waring, you're going to *sleep!*" She broke off suddenly.

Her husband defended himself. "It's just this beastly light in my eyes," he pleaded.

Mrs. Waring went on. "Of course Mr. Johnson came promptly, and I had the library *so* nicely arranged; a little desk and some pencils all freshly sharpened, and a ribbon to tie up the manuscripts, if he wanted to take them away with him. I must confess, Manton, that I was disappointed at first. Mr. Johnson wanted *us* to pay for printing the book! Just fancy! But then, you know, one can't have everything; and really Mr. Pressy's earning a lot of money with all the readings. So, finally, I said I'd agree if the author would, and that he'd be in very soon to decide the question. Manton Waring, it got to be a quarter to ten o'clock and Mr. Pressy hadn't appeared! We talked about all sorts of things.

"*Manton Waring, wake up!* There; that's better! Don't you see you put me all out! Where was I? Oh, talking with Mr. Johnson. Really! Those people who make books and things are limited as to conversation. He didn't know a single person that I did except a queer little woman who writes for the papers. It was up-hill work, and it got to be ten o'clock, and quarter past, and half-past, and still no Percival Pressy!"

"Mr. Johnson fidgeted, and I was bored; but there was nothing to do, for he hasn't any telephone—really, I think that people ought to be obliged by law to have them; it's so inconvenient with-

out. And at eleven, there'd been some dreadful stretches of silence. Mr. Johnson rose, and said he really must go. He spoke about another appointment, but it was perfectly plain that he was annoyed. Do you blame him?

"After he had gone, Manton, it suddenly occurred to me that *Violet* hadn't come back, and she'd promised to be in at nine! I was awfully anxious, so I rang up Cousin Mary's house—I think they'd all gone to bed—and found that she'd left *hours* ago. You may imagine the state of mind I was in then. If I'd had any idea you were at home, I should have sent you out to look for her.

"Well, I just *sat* there and waited, right in the hall. At twenty minutes of twelve I heard steps outside, and I opened the door before any one could ring. Of course, I'd let the servants go to bed. I have my opinion of people who keeps them up all night. And there stood *Violet*, with *Mr. Pressy* beside her! I looked surprised, I know, but before I could say a word *Mr. Pressy* spoke.

"'We're sorry to be so late, but we've been walking in the park, and forgot all about the time!'

Mrs. Waring paused at the dramatic moment. Her husband, wide-awake now, laughed openly.

"Light begins to dawn!" said he.

Mrs. Waring ignored this comment. "I hope I was kind, and I am sure I was dignified," she went on. "I suggested to *Violet* that she go straight to bed, which she did, and then I was left alone with *Mr. Pressy*.

"'And now,' said I—*Mrs. Waring* had risen in her excitement to enact the scene—"you will acknowledge that, as the hostess of that young girl, I have a right to ask an explanation of these proceedings."

"*Mr. Pressy* grew red, Manton; but I must confess it was becoming, for he's usually too pale. Then he spoke very quietly.

"'You have every right in the world, *Mrs. Waring*, and I'm glad to tell you; but I wonder that you haven't

seen what was going on long ago. Why, it means that *Violet* has promised to-night to marry me, and I want you to congratulate me, and to let me thank you for all you've done for both of us.'

"I was so astonished that I simply stared at him, but he held out his hand, Manton, and of course I *had* to take it.

"'But you forget your career, *Mr. Pressy*,' said I. "You broke your appointment with *Mr. Johnson* to-night—what about your *poems*?"

"'Oh, bother my career; bother *Mr. Johnson*!' said he. "I see things differently now, *Mrs. Waring*, and I'm not going to make an ass of myself any longer. I'm done with poems, *Mrs. Waring*, but I'll prove that I'm good for *something*. *Violet's* father has written her that he'll give me a job in his *boiler-factory*!'"

Waring sat up in bed again. His attitude suggested a cheer.

"Good boy!" he cried. "That's the talk! I didn't know he had it in him, *Gussie*, you're to be congratulated! You'll have done wonders if you make a decent man of business out of a bad poet!"

Through *Mrs. Waring's* ruefulness a ray of comfort seemed to break.

"Of course I'm dreadfully disappointed myself; but if *you're* pleased, that's something, even if it's very different from what I planned."

She grew silent in a moment's thoughtfulness; and when she spoke again she was actually smiling.

"Manton, it's just occurred to me that really I needn't worry, for I dare say *Mr. Pressy* won't stop writing at all! Nowadays poets find inspiration in such queer things: steamboats and machinery! Look at *Kipling*! It *is* *Kipling*, isn't it? And don't you remember that one of *Percival's* very best poems was about a motor-car—I read it to you. It begins—'Thou mighty monster, built of steel and fire!' Now, Manton, if he's got that taste, there's no earthly reason why *Mr. Pressy* shouldn't write something perfectly charming about a *boiler*!"



THE RETURN OF THE FIRST

By Margarita J. Gerry

AL TRAYMORE waited while Mrs. Deming came over the lawn to the pergola. From where he sat, in its shade, he noticed that she was a tall woman—he had almost forgotten how tall. With a novel thrill of pride in his possessions, he realized that there was much for unsatiated eyes to enjoy in the prospect that lay around her. Almost to the edge of the jagged, piled-up rocks that protected the Traymore strip of Maine coast from the tumbling, seething water, lay the close, hard-won carpet of grass. When she turned to look back at the rambling gray cottage, he knew she was thinking how like it was to a jutting-out of the thinly covered cliff out of which it was built. Traymore found that he could follow her thought almost as he had used to do. The terraces that descended from the house to the pergola were outlined by formal privet hedges, and sentined by monolithic, clipped evergreens. The great native trees shook themselves free from their frivolous neighbors, and stretched their heads, away from artificialities of sward and terrace, toward the sea, which, from the beginning, they had known.

Traymore rose as she entered the vine-walled place.

"We are the first of a laggard household," he said. "Mrs. Traymore will

not be able to pour tea for us this afternoon. She is very nearly ill with a bad headache. She asked me to find some one to fill her place."

"I'm sorry—" Mrs. Deming paused, with her arms on the white pillars that bounded the threshold. "I suppose she doesn't want to see any one? It must be quite unbearable to have the slightest thing the matter with one on a day like this."

She found the chair that best pleased her, and seated herself where she could look out to sea. The climbing waves were eating up the narrow strip of beach that still lay bare below the rocks. It was almost high tide. She made no effort to talk. Unlike most women, Mrs. Deming never feared a silence, even when she was conscious, as now, that she was being looked at. After some moments she began searching half-heartedly in the recess in the arm of her willow easy chair.

"What is it?" asked Traymore idly, his eyes, not on the hands, but on the face of his guest.

"It doesn't matter; it isn't here," said Mrs. Deming, with a relieved sigh. "I thought I left some embroidery here this morning—I'm sure I did. Jeanne must have followed me and picked it up. Jeanne is depressing, she never fails to do her duty—"

"From what Mrs. Traymore says of our maids, Jeanne must be a lonesome survival." Traymore, with his back to

the sea, was absently flicking a bit of cigar ash off the low, round table.

"All the better for you—you don't have to live up to a standard. There is something in the way Jeanne puts that embroidery out for me—where I can't fail to see it—that makes me feel it my duty to have it with me every minute. Not that I ever work, but it keeps me from dreaming as much as I want to do. Now I won't have even to pretend."

She laughed a little, with an appealing, spoiled-child delight in perverseness, and, hands clasped behind her head, gazed out into the sunshine. Her clear hazel eyes took on a golden tone. Traymore thought them gemlike with their black-rimmed irises.

"Do you still go in for dreaming?" he asked, in a curious tone. "I supposed double harness—er—strapped that out. I dropped mine when—" He stopped with embarrassment, as if he realized that he was making an admission.

Mrs. Deming directed a glance toward him.

"Oh, Ralph and I bargained with each other as to dreams. Why don't the others come?" She accommodated her long figure, with its matronly curves, more closely to the luxurious depth of the chair. She was, frankly, thirty-five, with the beauty of merging freshness and maturity which thirty-five is sometimes allowed to possess. "Oh, I remember, Mr. Russell and Miss Carslake have gone sailing. They asked me to go with them, but I—refrained."

"Which one asked you?" demanded Traymore, with meaning.

"Mr. Russell—first," she admitted, with a careful absence of coquetry. "But Miss Carslake begged me, too, very prettily."

"You are the first to be favored. You have even the women spellbound. That's why I never get a word with you," grumbled the man. "Billy and Marion are probably still at the links. They started out after luncheon for their sixth match this week."

"Yes, Marion asked me to go with them. She said I could play with Billy,

and she would find a partner at the club-house."

"Skilful Marion! Didn't Billy glow'er?"

"Yes, he did look a little unenthusiastic at first. But he's a kind-hearted boy. When I had made him realize how hurt I was, he asked me, too."

"Billy also? The others have gone over to the harbor. You were not invited by them, I'll be bound."

"No, they must have sneaked. I didn't see them until they had almost reached the lodge. I noticed that they had taken the precaution to choose the runabout."

"So they have left us all alone," said Traymore slowly.

He glanced at Mrs. Deming, and then averted his eyes. He got up hastily and picked up a golf-club that stood in the corner; he inspected it carefully. The place was very quiet. The beating of the water against the rocks below them was an insistent, to him almost a deafening sound. Finally he put down the club and faced his guest. She took no pains to avoid his eyes.

At that moment a maid appeared with the tea-tray. Mrs. Deming smiled at her, and the girl made a response that was a queer mixture of proper stolidity and spontaneous affection. When she had gone—

"Will you pour the tea, Mrs. Deming?" asked Traymore ceremoniously.

"I can't hope to fill Mrs. Traymore's place." She rose as she spoke. "She makes a picture with the tea things."

Traymore moved her chair nearer to the low table.

"Sugar?" she queried, after an interval, tongs in hand.

"Thank you, I believe I don't care for tea. But pour some for yourself. Or shall I?"

"I don't care for tea, either." She put the tongs down and moved away from the table.

Traymore went over to the western side of the pergola. He leaned over the low seat that ran around the place. The waves were pounding at their stone rampart.

"It will be high tide in a few minutes," he said.

Then he went back to the table. He threw himself into his chair. Mrs. Deming did not speak. In the silence her host relaxed into inertia. He sat, rather moodily, with his head on his hands. He did not realize how intently he was looking at his guest. He was trying to rediscover in her the girl he had last seen fifteen years ago—trying to fit her presence to his thoughts of what she might have become. During the fifteen years they had been as completely separated as though they had been divided by the continent. Then had come the chance of this summer when, during most of August, she had been a visitor at the next place. His wife, who was always a little jealous of Mrs. Barelay-Henderson's lions, had cultivated this latest one. Then the week under his roof. He moved uneasily in his chair at the recollection of emotions that the week had liberated.

Mrs. Deming glanced at him a moment, observed the expression on his face, and turned her eyes away again.

The hair he knew. It was, as it had been then, brown, merely brown, neither red nor golden. But she wore it now with a more artful simplicity. The forehead, which just escaped being high, seemed to him to show—smooth as it was—subtle traces of all she had thought since then. Her eyes were, at once, more suggestive of intensity and more guarded. He was afraid of her eyes. But the mouth—In that he saw again the Lorraine of the summer he remembered—when she was twenty and he was twenty-three. The lips of the girl Lorraine had been sometimes pressed out of their lovely curves into the lines of young austerity. The lips of this woman, who was the wife of a man he had never seen—whom he didn't want to see—had relaxed into a sweetness and a tolerance that made her, somehow, younger, more of a child, than the girl he had—

"This is the first time, Hal, that we have been alone together."

He raised his head from his hands and let them fall uncertainly on the

table between them. Something in the voice, as well as in the words, made him start. But when he had roused himself, her face expressed nothing. There was the barrier of laughter, which she always interposed before his craving to understand.

"You look positively frightened," she said lightly. "Doesn't it always come? Don't men and women who have known each other always meet again, and—take account of stock—see where they both stand?"

"Why—I hadn't thought of it—that way," said Traymore, with uneasiness. There was nothing either in her words or in her face to make him so.

"I knew it would come," she said, "every day of the fifteen years."

Traymore accused himself of being a cad, that he couldn't hear her speak without—remembering. The hand that lay on the table shook a little. Mrs. Deming saw the tremor. She leaned forward and touched the brown fingers lightly.

"It's very much the hand of a gentleman," she said, almost with tenderness. "I would like to model it." She raised her eyes to the face of her host. It, too, she thought, was very much the face of a gentleman — fastidious, clear-eyed, healthily tanned. His hair grew, she realized, in just the old way—and her lips trembled.

"What have you done with your life, Hal?" She smiled at him with a frank friendliness. Again she had seen, what she had caught before, a touch—was it the slight droop at the corner of the mouth that made it?—a hint of slackness, of bitterness.

"You were such an ambitious boy, Hal; so full of plans and purposes. You must have been able to do much. You used to say that you must first get money—only *first*—all the other plans were to come then. Fortune was to be the motive power to your schemes for effective work for leadership. You had force in you. The motive power came easily." There was a trace of humor in the twist of her lips. "They told me that you had married for money."

The man started, but she laid her light hand, for a moment, on his.

"Since I have been here and have seen Sophie, I have known that was not true." She almost smiled as she watched the complex expression with which he subsided into his chair. "But—what do you do with your life?"

The quiet authority in her voice made him, square-jawed, big-framed American as he was, docile.

"Why—my collection of prints takes a good deal of my time—I propose giving it to the Congressional Library at Washington some time. And I am always being appointed to serve on boards for different things. And some of us go in for reform in ward politics. We vote—and it's a mess, too."

"And you golf, and box with your trainer to keep yourself fit physically, and hunt a bit, and go abroad once in two years. And here you spend a month or so being host at house-parties?"

He nodded, slowly turning red.

"I know how very nicely time can pass," she said brightly.

"There doesn't seem much else to do—does there?—when there isn't the necessity for work."

She looked at him a moment tentatively.

"Was that what you used to—" she said, and stopped.

He turned on her.

"No one would have imagined, fifteen years ago, that you would have gone in for illustrating and designing."

She smiled as she realized that she was being attacked.

"And made yourself famous. I didn't." He spoke grimly.

Her forehead contracted.

"Oh, don't say 'famous,'" she said. "It sounds so—rococo. I have done nothing but, by very hard work, make a market for some things I have to sell. I've had opportunity to observe children, you know"—with sudden laughter. "I've had my own for models. I would be very stupid if I couldn't paint them."

"However, I didn't divine that you

had it in you then. Or that you were anything but just clear womanly."

She did not reply for a moment, but gazed down at her hands. When she spoke it was impersonally and quite simply, as though he were not there.

"Perhaps I wouldn't have done anything if I had married you." There was something like regret in her tone.

The man paled a little and turned away.

"I wonder," she went on, "if one would have been happier to have been just a woman?"

"Tell me about your life," he hurriedly interjected. "Have you found it good?"

"Good?" It has been intoxicating at times, and sometimes tragic, but never just 'good.' Oh, Hal, it's been such a scramble, such a struggle, out of worries and waiting. You see, Ralph has his work, and I have mine. We married before it was prudent. Then there were the children—four of them—all together." She laughed. "And we heartened each other and impeded, delighted each other and hated, criticized each other and appreciated. What a hurried, breathless, rushing time it seems now, with the deadly abysses of discouragement just before the great moments of emotion and exultation. And, out of it all, somehow, we have risen, into calm and the divine right to work. Ralph writes the most exquisite prose of its type to-day, and I have established my vogue. And now, for the first time, we can breathe."

She stopped and drew a long breath of the tingling air.

"I haven't had many holidays like this." She turned toward him. "A summer of long, idle days, with men and women of graceful and pleasant leisure. I have loved it—every minute."

"But—" he began, indignant, compassionate.

"Oh, of course, we have had outings." She laughed. "But—when one travels with four children; Ralph's secretary, two nurses, and Jeanne; a lunch-hamper, a refrigerator filled with milk and bottles, five suit-cases, and an as-

sortment of baseball-bats, dolls, golf-sticks, umbrellas, and parcels. Then when one has to visit in the baggage-car the family of white rabbits, two collies, Bob's guinea-pigs, and Peepsie's cat and canary. Now, you can't call that restful."

"I don't know," he began slowly. "I would."

"No, it isn't—and you wouldn't. You have no children."

Instantly she repented. There was a change in her face, but she kept her eyes turned from him.

The waves stormed half-way up the ledge of rock on which the pergola was perched. The spray rose so near them that they felt the damp breath of each cresting wave.

"Come," she said, with sweet companionableness. "Come here by me." He dragged his chair beside hers. They both looked out to sea.

"I shall use this"—with a wave of her hand. "It will get into my work when I go back home. There is nothing that one doesn't use. I have used love, anger, passion, the love for my children, the feeling of their arms around my neck. My baby died. With the tears blinding my eyes I did my best work."

She felt him recoil beside her. "One doesn't love less," she said gently. "And one doesn't suffer the less. It is rather that from somewhere outside of you, you are impelled to fix a symbol of the thing you have felt—just as you have set a mark here to record your high tides. And you suffer for yourself and for the sorrow of the other mothers in the compass of one sob."

The water glided in, sucked in, crashed in to the crannies of the rock. The man and woman followed the endless procession of the waves until they felt themselves part of the irresistible force of nature.

"When the tide hides the shore and you sit here, it is almost as good as being at sea—better if you don't want to bother with the sail, but would rather float and dream," he said at last.

The solemnity left her face as she turned a swift glance on him.

"Oh, then 'double harness' hasn't quite 'strapped dreams out'?"

"No—of course not—some dreams; naturally, I like to go back and think about—when I met Sophie—and—that."

Mrs. Deming laughed mischievously.

"My meeting with Ralph was most romantic," she said, echoing the protestant loyalty of his tone. "Wouldn't you like to hear about it?"

He turned red under the tan. But she kept her eyes on him until he, too, laughed—shamefacedly. Then with one of her swift changes:

"It is better than being at sea, because you see more than the waves around you. You get the whole tranquil sweep, and you never lose the skyline. Come! Let us not talk. We'll be quiet and—sail."

They were content with sea and sky. Gulls darted past them; a sail swept across their line of vision. The water beat around them. Far out they followed its motion until—they were rocking on its surface, drifting out to sea. They were so alone. The lady stole a swift look at her companion. There was a shadow in the eyes that she had known before. His lips were set.

"Hal," she said softly, "it might almost be the lake."

"No, no, it isn't blue enough. And you can't see the shore; it's a waste." He spoke half to himself, with a sort of dreary unconsciousness.

"It is the lake," she said obstinately. "Only it has grown larger. Beyond it is the shore. But the sun is low. The lake always used to be gray when the sun was low."

"But I was never looking at the water then," he said. "When the lake was gray it was growing late, and I knew that we would have to go in. I didn't want to see it. And I was looking—somewhere else. I—" He turned his face to hers, and met her eyes. "Oh, I beg your pardon." He checked himself. "What rot I am talking!"

"What rot?" she repeated. "Is it? When we play it is the lake? Only it belongs to us, who are older—not to the boy and girl. We know more of

vastness and of mystery. We are afloat on it. The lake used to have half-hidden coves. The floor was blue and clear. And when we had entered any one, we had discovered a new country—a new heaven and a new earth. But all around us were the kind, safe shores, where others, like us, lived and loved."

"And when we entered"—Traymore's voice broke in; it was changed in quality—"the girl would take off her hat. The sun would be in her eyes. And her mouth—"

A sudden flurry of wind burst into the pergola and blew a week-old newspaper down from the table. The interruption was effectual. It startled Traymore out of the glamour that was settling about him. He stooped down and picked up the paper. When he had straightened himself again he had come to himself. He did not dare to meet the woman's eyes.

But Mrs. Deming was not concerned with him. Apparently she hardly realized that she was not alone. Was she thinking aloud, or talking to him?

"And the boy would throw his hat into the bottom of the boat. There would be a line of red across his forehead; beyond it the sunburn had not reached. His hair would curl like little rings of black silk. And, oh, the dreams that he would spin with his eyes on hers!"

Traymore shivered. In desperation he got up and walked over to the seat. There were no vines on the seaward side. He picked loose pieces of mortar and began throwing them, with long, strong movements of his arm, out to sea.

"Don't you think it would be well to change the topic?" he said.

Mrs. Deming closed her eyes for a moment, and threw her head up, smiling deprecatingly.

"I'm sorry I am boring you," she said innocently.

Then she relapsed into silence. Finally the silence got on Traymore's nerves. He began to pitch wildly. She looked around at him.

"How far you can throw," she commented. "Farther even than you used.

You remember I never could. You tried to teach me, didn't you, one day at Barr's Cove?"

Traymore gave a short little laugh, and came back to his chair.

"That wasn't a very happy suggestion," he said; "if we are looking for topics that are not quite so—personal." He scrutinized her moodily. Her eyes were deep, and her young, red mouth was sweet. "So you remember the day when we landed at Barr's Cove, and I began to teach you to skip stones, and—The last day of the seven?" he demanded.

"That whole day that our foolish elders let us have?" She laughed. "Yes, I remember." She let the silence tell all it knew. He did not take his eyes away. "That last day," she said dreamily, "when the air was full of a rustle of expectation and a stir of pain. For you were going away to make your fortune." She glanced at him. His hands were gripped about the arms of his chair; the knuckles were white. "To make our fortune," she repeated.

"And the girl was at the end of it!" he said harshly. "Lorraine!" He turned on her. "What are we doing? Why do you make me do it? It isn't safe. I—have always hoped I was a gentleman; I don't enjoy being disloyal. I tell you it isn't safe. I can't—" He cut the words off and shut his mouth grimly.

She did not hear him; or, if she heard, she did not seem to understand his meaning.

"The girl knew that he—thought it was for her," she said, in her rich, ardent voice. "But she thought she knew more about the years that must come between than—you did. Or perhaps, even then, she knew you. You didn't quite convince her that there would never be some one, or something, else. Or, perhaps, she was merely unawakened and filled with the impulse to hide what was so new to her. Girls are that way. And so, while the boy spun his stories of the triumph that he saw so clearly, and of all that was to follow upon it, when he moved toward her with his young, sound body full of un-

comprehended stirs and tremors, when his eyes begged her—"

"When he turned to her—" The man's voice broke in almost rudely. It was roughened, and it shook. He kept his face turned away from her. She did not need to see. "When he turned to her with every need, every craving fastened on her, when he demanded that she should give him the one thing that could make him the owner of his own powers, because it would have been the only proof that she belonged to him and to no other man!"

"The kiss," she said calmly. "But, you see, something told her that, through the years that must pass, she could not be sure of him. Somebody, or something, would come between them. She could not risk the inviolability of herself. And she was right." For the first time something tense, personal, came into her voice. "Something did come between. And you forgot—everything!" There were contempt and bitterness in her tone.

"You were not right," he said hotly. "I would have been sealed to you. I would have gone away permeated with the feeling of your lips on mine, warmed by it. It would have made me know—that I never did know—that you were a woman who could love, who knew what love was; that everything I wanted was waiting for me! Lorraine! How I could have fought! It wouldn't have been like this if you had made me know!"

"Men—Yes, men must always know that." There was no bitterness now in the tone, only sadness. "But, with a girl, the vision comes first. And for a time it is a dream only, and secret. Men say that, with a girl, love is only a sentiment. Perhaps it is so—sometimes. Perhaps it is always that—chiefly. But, at least, she is faithful to her sentiment, even when the man has shaken off that thing which he pretends is stronger; stronger and deeper than she can ever feel. And, when her dream has vanished, whatever richer things may come, there is a perfume that has escaped—"

Traymore rose abruptly and paced

feverishly about the narrow space. He said nothing. But the sound of his breathing filled the place. A word rose in his throat, but he crushed it between his teeth. He stumbled into the seat and leaned out over the ledge. The waves were lashing against the mark on the rocks.

"It's flood-tide," he muttered inconsequently. And his eyes sought her face.

She raised her head and looked at him, full, for the first time. He moved toward her—so roughly that she felt as if she had heard something break. He bent over her. The defiance of his darkened face might have made her fearful. But she was not a woman who was afraid of many things. She met his stormy eyes with hers, dark now, too, and misty and bright. And as the man looked—the girl was waiting for him at the end of his journey; this time she would answer his thirst for her love. He knew suddenly that this thing had been foreordained from the beginning.

Traymore swept her to her feet with the strength of his arm. He held her to him. He searched her baffling eyes to drag out their meaning.

"Lorraine," he said, struggling painfully for the words, "you have come to me—to tell me—you will—after all?" His lips crushed hers.

There was a strangled sound behind them. Mrs. Deming turned suddenly. Traymore slowly pushed his bewildered way out from the web that surrounded him. He saw his wife. He stared at her blankly. He had the sensation that this horror, too, was foreordained to be so.

II.

Mrs. Traymore was a small, graceful, slender woman. Every wave of her blond hair was in its appointed and effective place. The recent headache had left blue stains under her eyes and an unusual pallor. But her frock of girlish pale blue was perfect in its lines, and put on magically. Her face was a mask of unbelieving horror. Curiously

enough, the embarrassment of the hostess at having made an awkward moment for her guest struggled through the emotion. She hesitated at the threshold and murmured automatically:

"I found that I was stronger than I had supposed." It sounded like an apology.

The next instant, the realization that it was actually her husband whom she had seen there—with the other woman—overwhelmed her. The crimson rushed over her face. She raised her small, ringed hands to her eyes, as if to shut out the sight, and turned back to the path.

Traymore was incapable of movement. He stared in front of him with a face that was devoid of all expression. Mrs. Deming alone was self-possessed. For one moment she looked as if she despaired at the task before her. But, with a sudden movement, she was at Mrs. Traymore's side. She put her arms around the other woman's shoulders and forced her back into the pergola. She spoke to her with the soothing, authoritative tone which a physician uses with a neurotic patient who needs to be coerced for her own good.

"There, there, you can't help thinking the very worst now. After a while you will understand, but now you can't help it. It must be inexpressibly shocking to you. Hate me now as much as you want to. Hate me, but wait."

Mrs. Traymore shrank from her guest.

"Sit down," Mrs. Deming said, compelling her. Then, half-laughing, she took a light silk scarf that was around Mrs. Traymore's shoulders, crossed it at the back, and held the ends playfully with her own muscular hands. It formed an effective bond.

Mrs. Traymore stared at her with frightened eyes. She turned her face toward her husband in an appeal for help. Then she remembered, and frowned. Mrs. Deming seated herself in front of her hostess and put both her hands, one still holding the ends of the scarf, on the smaller woman's hands. She leaned forward, her eyes unshrinkingly on the other's.

"You have got to listen to me," she said.

"There is nothing that you can say to me," said the little woman, with no emotion in her voice but that of contempt. "The only thing you can do is to let me go."

Mrs. Deming went on as if she had not spoken.

"I can't have it this way, that I should make you suffer in return for your lovely hospitality. You are going to listen to me. It isn't his fault. I made him do it!"

The mixture of triumph and childish mischief with which she said this was inscrutable. With sheer amazement, Mrs. Traymore looked her in the eyes. For the first time Traymore's voice was heard.

"I can't have this," he began. "This is impossible——"

"You see," she continued, not heeding him, "I am so used to arranging my pictures to make them tell the story I want them to, and so accustomed to talking over the plots of my husband's romances, that I am afraid I have got into the way of thinking that men and women are just so much material to act out the story that one has in one's mind. It's odd, but people often do what I have planned. Ralph says I hypnotize them into romance."

She interrupted herself to laugh. No one joined her. With gentle, leisurely movements she stroked her hostess' hands. Mrs. Traymore obstinately resigned herself to sitting still. She would not struggle with the woman. Her averted face was cold and unbelieving.

"That's what I did with your husband. Dear me!" She tried to smooth back a heavy lock of hair that, loosened by the freshening wind, was blowing in her eyes. "You do look so exquisitely *neat*. You always make me feel blowsy."

Mrs. Traymore started. She was angry. The change of subject seemed to show such extraordinary levity. But, somehow, the tenseness of the situation was relieved, the normal world was restored. Mrs. Deming felt the begin-

ning she had made. She took again, very gently, the cold and reluctant little hands in hers.

"My dear, this is how it happened: A long time ago your husband and I were boy and girl. We were thrown together in the summer for one week. At the end of it he was to go away, out into the world, to make his fortune. It was a beautiful land that we were in." Her eyes softened. Memories of dreams drifted across her face; dreams so potent that the man and woman with her felt them. "It was very early in the summer, and everything was fresh and green. The mystery of youth was around us and its invitations. We were of an age for dreams, and we dreamed. Have you known such? We thought that we loved each other."

Mrs. Deming felt the hands she held tremble. Into the face of the other woman had come a new look—that of grief.

"We *thought* that we loved each other," she repeated, with the faintest emphasis upon the second word. The tremor subsided. She went on.

"We were on a lake together, and we floated into little coves that were almost hidden from sight by overhanging trees and shrubs. Don't you know?" She stopped. Mrs. Traymore had started. Something told the woman who was watching that there had been a lake that Mrs. Traymore, too, remembered. "It was all a tender, misty sort of thing, my dear," she went on, "but very beautiful—as it always is. I had just finished with my school. His mind was clean, and he was filled with confidence and ardor. His hair was so thick, and grew in such an attractive way. We dreamed and floated together. And then he was to go away." She stopped again and looked at the other woman, as if she were trying to pierce the barrier that hid from her what dreams the blue eyes held. "There came a last day; a day when the air was full of a rustle of expectation and a stir of pain."

Traymore stirred behind them. It was unendurable to him that she should repeat the very words. But neither

woman heeded him. For the one who was speaking was watching narrowly; and the other was fast-bound in dreams evoked by some spell from the past.

"He was to work for me, and I was to wait for him. He wanted me to give him a kiss for a token; a token that I was sealed to him and to no other man."

Again came a half-articulate sound from the man who sat by the table with his head buried in his hands.

"Lorraine," he said, "how can you—"

Mrs. Deming watched to see if it had been heard. Mrs. Traymore had turned her eyes out to sea. She was not thinking of her husband. The sound of the waves filled the place as the water sucked out from shore. A triumphant light came into Mrs. Deming's eyes. She knew that it was another lake, another boy, another girl, and—another kiss that filled the mind of Traymore's wife. The waves eddied in endless procession.

Before the spell could fail Mrs. Deming took up her task.

"Something kept me from it," she said softly. "He went away. It all faded. After a time he knew you and he loved you better. Afterward—" For the first time she hesitated. Her voice broke. But she went on again. "Afterward"—not all of her skill could keep a faint bitterness out of the tone—"I knew my husband and I loved him better. With both of us, after the dream, came the real love. But I don't know whether I can make you understand this; perhaps you can't understand it; you are not as spoiled, as perverse as I. In all my life that thwarted kiss, 'the sense of that which I forebore,' has stood as a portal before the great Might-have-been. I gave to my husband a love"—she turned to look at Traymore—"beside which the other was as thin spun as mist. But still the other was the incompletely dreamt. How could I tell whether, if I had given the kiss, some great Power might not have come and have swept us both into a haven of enchantment."

Mrs. Traymore disengaged herself, gently enough, from the pressure of the

other woman's hands. She rose and went to the side of the pergola; the side farthest away from her husband. There, leaning against a pillar, she stood, her eyes passing over rocks and waves and the home-coming sails, fixed upon the distant mystery of the horizon.

"I had to know." Mrs. Deming smiled to herself, well contented. "I had to be sure that, all these years, I had not been deluding myself with second best, when the best had beckoned. Real life and real loving are not all like dreams, however much they hold that dreams can never offer. So"—her voice began to falter, and she presented a picture of girlish shame—"when I saw your husband here—I—went over it all—just as I did with you—and I made him do it. And then—"

Something new that had come into her tone startled the listening man and woman into tenser expectation. Mrs. Traymore turned away from the distant point on which her eyes had been resting. As she turned, the visions that had come out of the sea to confront her were dispelled. Instead, she saw Mrs. Deming, with the burden in her eyes of something still unsaid. She saw her husband, who was straining forward, waiting; he, too, in suspense. She did not have time to feel anything. Mrs. Deming's voice rang out suddenly. It was glad, triumphant. But it had in it a note of personality, of reality, that made all that she had said before seem like the shifting glimpses of a dream.

"I found that fate had been wise. I found—as soon as his lips touched mine I knew it—that my husband was the man to whom I had given all that was real, all that was best in me to give."

Traymore relaxed. He let his face fall again into his hands. But Mrs. Deming was not looking at him. Her eyes were on the wife. Mrs. Traymore had turned to her husband. The conventionalism that had encased her had fallen. The pretty, delicate lines of her face were all broken into softness, into yearning. With a sort of mysterious joy she went over and touched his hair with her fingers.

"Harry," she said softly, almost as

if it were she who should beg for pardon, "it was to you that I have given all that was best in me to give."

Her husband looked up and smiled faintly. His hand closed gently over hers. But before he could speak, Mrs. Deming put her arms around the other woman and turned the face so she could look into her eyes.

"Do you believe me," she asked, smiling; "and forgive me, and understand?"

Mrs. Traymore, still transformed with the glow of her feeling, replied:

"I do believe you, and forgive you, and understand." She kissed her.

The next moment they faced each other, almost shamefaced, in the relapse into the standards of every day. Mrs. Traymore was glad to be able to remember that she had brought a letter to her guest. Mrs. Deming took it eagerly.

"Will you excuse me?" she said, as she settled herself into a seat and read it hurriedly. There was a soft stir of turning sheets. Traymore got up and moved about restlessly. Mrs. Traymore seated herself again and watched her husband.

"Oh, I must go," Mrs. Deming cried out eagerly. "The children are asking for me. My mother can't stay with them any longer, and"—she hesitated, while a delicious, girlish flush rose in her cheeks—"my husband says I must come. He won't be patient a day longer!"

She looked at the husband and wife before her with an expression in which there was some constraint.

"I must go and find Jeanne," she said. "We must catch the ten o'clock express. I will have to help pack. Even Jeanne, alone, can never get things together before dinner-time. I—will say good-by to you later on." She smiled at Mrs. Traymore and turned away.

When she had climbed half-way up the first terrace she turned and looked back. Traymore caught her eye. The low, red light of the sun flooded her face. Was there sympathy in her eyes, or triumph, or comprehension?

"Is she woman or artist or child?" he wondered drearily. "Or is she merely—feminine? Why did she do this? She surely could not have wanted to do—what she did do—to me. She is a sweet, kind, gracious woman, who loves her husband and her children. She could not have meant it." She had gained the second terrace, and smiled back. Was the smile good to see? Who can solve the mystery of the feminine? A turn in the path hid her. Traymore wondered whether, in the years, he could ever shake off the dreariness of the question.

Mrs. Traymore was watching her husband. She was not satisfied with his silence, his manner. She felt again a sharp pang of jealousy.

"Harry," she began, in a dubious tone.

The sun, a red ball, suddenly slid below the waters. It was plunging down into the horizon, where, but a minute ago, she had seen her visions of the past. A hot flush rose to her face as she remembered. It drove from her mind any thought of her husband's shortcomings.

She went over, a little fussily, to the tea-table. Somehow life seemed a little more normal with the tea things, and

she was glad. She had had her great moment, and it was passed. She felt more comfortable in the boundaries of feeling to which she was accustomed. She raised the tea-cozy and touched the pot with one pretty finger.

"Why, it is still hot," she said joyfully. "The cups haven't been used. Didn't Mrs. Deming give you some tea?" There was reproach for such oversight in her voice. "You poor boy, I'll give you a cup now. Two lumps or one?"—with the tongs poised daintily.

"Two," said Traymore mechanically, going over to his wife and putting his arm kindly around her shoulder.

She bent her head, to rub her cheek affectionately against his hand.

"Two?"—dubiously. "You know sugar is fattening." One of the chief activities of Mrs. Traymore's life was to keep down her husband's waist-line.

"Two," repeated Traymore decidedly.

"Oh, very well," she said indulgently.

They drank their tea together. The tide, long past its flood, sucked out in long, dingy swirls. When they left the pergola, the rocks and the narrow band of sand left bare looked greasy and unclean. Great lumps of seaweed lay pitched about in limp, abandoned dejection.



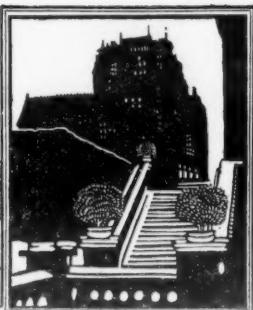
BITS OF LANDSCAPE

THE morn is hot;
The fog, with sunshine shot,
Has settled on the chestnut's top,
From whose drenched branches bright pearls drop.
Loud calls mine heart yon climbing wood,
Its trees a stately brotherhood,
Whose shadows half the valley fill,
And turn to lead yon silver rill,
Where billows of red clover throw
Their flaming surf.

LEE FAIRCHILD.

EWING'S LADY

BY HARRY
LEON WILSON



CHAPTER I.

TWO weeks of instructive contact with the Bar-7 school of gallantry had prepared Mrs. Laithe to be amazed at her first encounter with Ewing's kid. Riding out from the ranch one afternoon and turning, for coolness, up the wooded mesa that rises from the creek flat, she overwhelmed him at a bend in the trail. Stricken motionless, he glared at the lady with eyes in which she was compelled to believe that she read more horror than admiration. There was a moment of this; then her pony neighed a greeting to the statue—of dusty bronze—as if to say that things were not so bad as they seemed, and the gazing youth broke the spell his vision had laid upon him. He bowed his head doggedly and vanished beyond some low-growing cedars that lined the way.

As he fled, the lady laughed softly, yet was silent, with face austere set as she passed the point of his evanishment.

Elusiveness in the male, be it bluntly said, was confounding to the experience of Mrs. Laithe since she had ventured into the San Juan Mountains under the nominal care of an inattentive brother, and her belief was still firm that the men about her suffered little from shyness. This latest specimen would be a single variation from type and of

slight value in determining the ways of his kind.

As her pony picked its way up the trail she mused over the not unpleasant picture of the youth at bay. It was a thing to be caught at the moment, for she would find him otherwise, she believed, at their next meeting. She would come on him some day at Bar-7, or at one of the ranches neighboring it, and find him quite like his fellows, rigidly respectful, but with a self-confidence and a simple directness in his gallantry that had entertained her not a little as practised by local courtiers. He would be like the others, from Beulah Pierce, owner of Bar-7, down to Shane Riley, humble helper in the cook-house.

An hour later, refreshed by the balsam-laden air of the upper reaches, she left the woods at the foot of the mesa and rode out on the willow flat, lush with grass for Bar-7's winter feeding. From the first bench above the creek she descried the figures of two men in front of the ranch-house. One she saw to be Beulah Pierce, his incredible length draped lazily over the gate that opened into his wife's flower garden. Outside this gate, under the flow of his talk (Pierce would surely be talking), stood one whom the lady, riding nearer, identified as the youth who so lately had shirked a meeting with her. At this sight she warmed with a little glow of pride in her powers of prophecy. Truly, he had waited no long time. His hat was off, and he leaned

restfully against the withers of a saddled horse, a horse that drooped, head to the ground, in some far low level of dejection.

She laughed again, comprehending the fellow at last. His variation from type had been but seeming, due to an erratic but not constitutional embarrassment. Brazenly enough now he contrived to await her coming, craftily engaging the not difficult Pierce in idle talk. And Pierce, as she rode up, would perform, with stiff importance, the orthodox ceremony of presentation.

Indeed, the lady had learned the ways of the men of Bar-7. Even before she neared the gate Alonzo Pierce, son of Beulah, appeared round the corner of the ranch-house to take her pony, sauntering with a flagrant emui, in full knowledge that Sandy Goodhue had started violently on the same gallant mission, but from the farthest corral. Shane Riley, chained by his labors to the doorway of the cook-house, smirked genially out over a pot that he polished; and Red Phinney, star rider at Bar-7, seated himself on the step before the front door, so that he might have to arise with flourishing apologies—a performance that would move the lady to ask about his sprained wrist, now in bandage.

This familiar assembling of her court, professedly casual, was swiftly detected by Mrs. Laithe. But she saw now, being near the gate, a quick turning toward her of the strange youth. It was a brief, impersonal survey that seemed not to disengage her from the background of gray road and yellowish-green willows; but clearly it sufficed. With a curt nod to Pierce, he was mounted; in another breath his amazed and indignant horse, spurred viciously from its trance, raged with protesting snorts over the road to the east. As Mrs. Laithe reined up at the gate she beheld, through a nimbus of dust, the rider's boots groping pathetically for their stirrups.

She repressed a little gasp of astonishment in which the natural woman might have betrayed her view of so headlong a retreat, although, had Beulah

Pierce been alone at the gate, she might have descended to speech with him about this strangely retiring youth. But as 'Lon Pierce waited for her pony, with a masterly taunt for Sandy Goodhue, who came up breathless but late, and as Red Phinney had already risen from his obstructive seat in the doorway, his wrist held cunningly forward to provoke solicitous inquiry, the lady passed in with only such easy words as the moment demanded. She was reflecting, with agreeable interest, that the young man's avoidance of her would presently begin to seem pointed.

This conjecture was to be abundantly confirmed. Returning from her ride the following afternoon, she saw that the youth must pass her on the public highway. They were out on the flat, with no arboreal sanctuary for the timid one. The lady looked forward with genial malice to a meeting which, it appeared, he was now powerless to avoid. But the youth, perceiving his plight, instantly had trouble with a saddle-girth. Turning well out of the road, he dismounted on the farther side of his horse and busied himself with the mechanics of proper cinching. As Mrs. Laithe rode by she saw only the top of a wide-brimmed gray hat above the saddle.

Not until a day later did he come truly to face her, and then only by the circumstance of his being pinned by her within the high-walled corral where Red Phinney broke green horses to ride, work, or carry. Returning this day earlier than was her wont, and finding no one at the front of the house to take her pony, she had ridden back to the corrals. Here she delivered the animal to Phinney, but not before the timid one had been compelled to pass her. He did this, she thought, only after swiftly calculating the height of the walls that pent him. And though his hat was doffed as he hurtled by, his eyes were on the ground. Mrs. Laithe, feeling thus at liberty to stare brutally at him, felt a prodigious heightening of that tower of amazement he had been rearing within her mind, for she saw him blush most furiously; beheld it under the brown of his beardless face.

Yet there was more in the young face than this flaunted banner of embarrassment; and, scanning it intently, she resolved forthwith to know him.

Late that day she was pleased to come upon Beulah Pierce alone in the big living-room of the ranch-house. Smoking a pipe after supper, Beulah relaxed on the "lounge" after a toilsome season of ditch-making.

"Oh, him?" he answered, luxuriously extending legs that seemed much too long for any reasonable need of man, and pulling at his ragged red mustache. "Why, that's Ewing's kid."

"Ewing?" retorted Mrs. Laithe provocatively, winningly.

"Ewing," affirmed Pierce, with unaccustomed brevity, his mind at dalliance with other matters.

"Ewing's kid," murmured the lady, as if in careless musing.

"Sure, Ewing's kid—— I say," he broke off, "how'd you like that there little red 'roan you're ridin', Mis' Laithe?"

"Cooney? Oh, Cooney's a dear, generally. Sometimes he's stubborn and pretends to know the way better than I do."

"Sound and kind, though, I bet you."

"Oh, yes; but when I want to ride down the east side of the valley, why does he always try to go up that steep trail to the left? Sometimes I've quite a struggle to keep him in the valley road."

"Waal, you see, I bought him off'n Ewing's kid, an' he wants to git back home. Sure's ever we dast let him loose with the saddle-band, he's over to Ewing's place, come sunup. You give him his head any time—he'll carry you straight there."

"He will?"

"Surest thing *you* know. When that kid breaks a pony he gits it all gentled up so's it hones to git back to him."

"How interesting!"

"Naw—makes lashin's o' trouble fur them that buys off'n him. Say, Mis' Laithe, you was askin' about Ewing's kid."

"Was I?" She looked politely blank.

"Sure you was. Waal, Ewing's kid

is the son of a man named—now hear me talk! Course he's his father's son. Waal, anyway, this man Ewing comes in here with this kid about fifteen, sixteen year ago, an' takes that place over there by the lake to git cured up o' the consumption. He was a painter, painted pitchers an' all sech, understand?—puts up a big studio with a winder in it six feet high to paint by. But he was puny. He couldn't fat up none. You never seen a critter so gaunted as he was. Some said he never got over losin' his wife. Anyway, 't wa'n't no surprise when he was took off, seven, eight year ago. An' since he died that there kid has sort o' half-run the place along with a feller named Ben Crider that the old man had got fur help. O' course we all kind o' looked in on the boy at first to make sure he wa'n't in need, an' done a day's work now an' then, an' they raised a few horses an' a few cattle an' one thing an' another. Trouble with that boy, though, he's always putterin' round with his dad's paint-brushes, an' talkin' about portrayin' art, an' all like that, understand? I've told that kid time an' time again, 'Kid,' I says, 'never you mind about portrayin' art an' depictin' the linnerments an' the varied aspecks o' nature,' I says: 'you jes' burn up them foolish little long-shanked paint-brushes in your Charter Oak cookstove,' I says, 'an' ten' to portrayin' a good little bunch o' cattle an' depictin' Ben Crider to work, also, an' you'll git somewhrur's,' I says. But him—why, he jes' moons along. An' Ben Crider ain't much better. Ben ain't no *stimulant* to him. Ben had ort to been the only son of a tender-hearted widow lady of means. That's what he'd ort to been. You give him a new coon-song out of a Sunday supplement, an' his guitar, an' Ben's fixed fur half a day at least. *He ain't goin'* to worry none about a strayed yearlin' or two. Why, one time, I recollect——"

"Then young Mr. Ewing is a painter, too?" she interrupted.

"Waal"—Pierce became judicial—"yes an' *no*. He ain't a reg'ler one, like you might say—not like his pa was.

Still, he can do hand-paintin'—if you want to call it that. Made a pitcher o' me this summer, bein' buck-jumped by old Tobe. Tobe was cert'n'y actin' high, wide, an' handsome, comin' down with his four hoofs in a bunch, an' me lookin' like my works was comin' all apart the next minute. A *lively* pitcher—yes; but, my Lord! it wa'n't a thing you could show! It made me out that rediculous. Course, I aint' Mrs. Langtry, but you got to draw the line somewhars, ain't you?"

"And has he done other things?"

"Hey?"

"Painted other pictures?"

"Slathers—horses an' animals an' Ben Crider with his gun an' all sech, an' deer."

"Did you know his mother?"

"Eh?"

"Ewing's kid's mother?"

"Oh, no, I never knew that lady. She passed away sommers off up the State before these other parties moved in."

"Does the boy resemble his father?"

"Ewing? Waal, not to *say* resemble. In fact, he didn't favor him, not at all, that I can rec'lect. He must of been most like his ma."

The lady had been speaking as from a distance, staring fixedly into the fire, with the distraction of one engaged in some hopelessfeat of memory. So intently aloof was she that Pierce had to repeat his next remark.

"I say, you don't never want to let Cooney get you started up that trail you was speakin' about. First place, it's steeper'n the side of a house. Next place, ever let him git you to the top, he'd land you slambang over to Ewing's, spite of all you could do."

"Thank you! I'll be sure to remember that. Good night!"

She left him, still with the far-centered, puzzled look on her face—the shadow of some resemblance, indefinite, nameless, but insistent.

CHAPTER II.

Only a few miles separate Bar-7 from the Ewing place; but they are interesting miles, and at least one of them will

be found exciting by the town-bred novice. There is a stretch where the trail leaves the valley road and zigzags up the face of the east bench to a height from which one may survey the whole sleeping valley of the Wimmenuche as through a reducing-glass. The way seems no broader than one's hand, and to Mrs. Laithe, who approached it from across the flat and studied it for the first time as a practicable thoroughfare, it looked to be impossibly perpendicular; a climb that no horse in its right mind would attempt, an angle of elevation that no rider could sustain.

Brought to incredulity by this survey, she pulled Cooney to a walk as she neared the parting of the ways. Then, indecisively, she let the bridle-rein fall on his neck. The little horse loitered on, splashing through the creek with a few leisurely sips of its icy water (taken merely in the spirit of a connoisseur), and a moment later halted where the bench trail turned out. At the beginning of his intimacy with his present rider he had adopted rushing tactics at this point, leaping at the trail in a fine pretense that no other way could have been thought of, and showing a hurt bewilderment when the sudden pull brought him about and into the valley road. For that was a road that led nowhere, since it led away from his home.

Day after day he had played this game, seemingly with an untouched faith that some time he would win. Day after day had he exercised all his powers of astonished protest when the frustrating tug was felt. But these tugs had become sharper, to betoken the rider's growing impatience, and it may be surmised that on this day Cooney had lost his faith. If it were inevitable that one should be whirled back into the broad, foolish way, one might save effort by omitting that first futile rush; one might stop and let evil come. Cooney stopped now, drooping in languid cynicism.

His rider waited, wishing that he had not stopped; wishing he had rushed the trail as always before. She felt the need of every excuse for daring the hazards of that climb. Cooney waited—and

waited—morosely anticipating the corrective jerk of a rider who refused to guide him properly by pressing a rein across his neck. The shock was delayed. Cooney thrilled, aspiring joyously. He waited still another uncertain moment, bracing his slim legs. At last, with a quick indrawing of breath, he sprang up the only desirable trail in all the world, with an energy of scurrying hoofs that confined his rider's attention wholly to keeping her seat. She hardly dared look down even when the little horse stopped on a narrow ledge to breathe. Nor did Cooney tarry. Still fearful, perhaps, of that deadly backward jerk, he stopped but once again before the summit was reached.

Looking back over the ascent while the stanch little animal panted under her, Mrs. Laithe discovered that the thing had been worth while. The excitement had been pleasurable, and the view was a thing to climb for.

But the picture was not long to be enjoyed—no longer a time than Cooney needed to recover his wind. He was presently off through a sparse grove of aspen, breaking by his own will into a lope as they crossed a wide, grassy meadow, level between the wooded hills that sloped to its edge on either side. The rider caught his spirit, and laughed as she felt herself hurried to the consummation of this mild adventure; hurried up the long ridge, over a cross system of sudden gullies, through another wide meadow of the mountains where strange cattle paused to regard her rather disconcertingly; on through the gloom of other woods, the trail worrying itself up another ascent, and then out upon an open summit that looked down upon a tiny lake set in a cup of the hills.

Cooney hurried his rider down the ridge and out on a flat of marshy grass, thickly starred with purple gentians. Here he delayed only to recall, as it later appeared, a duty familiar to him in the days before he was sold into bondage. Standing across the trail where it neared the margin of the lake, a sedate-looking cow grazed and was at peace with the world.

Looking up as the horse bore down upon her, and observing that she was expected to move, the cow did so with but slight signs of annoyance in the shaking of her head. The incident, however, was not thus simply to be closed, for now began that which enabled the lady to regard the day as one of red adventure. Cooney swerved from the trail with a suddenness that was like to have unseated his rider. Then as the cow halted, head down and forefeet braced, he swerved once more, heading so obviously for the beast that she turned and trotted off on the trail, mumbling petulant remonstrance. With a knowing shake of his head, Cooney fell in behind her.

His intention might no longer be mistaken. He meant to drive the cow. Did she turn aside, Cooney turned aside, ever alert for her slightest deviation. The trail now lay through a grove of spruce and balsam that had been partially cleared, but the trees were still too many for the lady to relish being hurtled among them by a volatile and too-conscious cow-pony.

Then, to the glad relief of the rider, an opening showed through the trees close ahead, and in another moment Cooney had galloped her out into an extensive clearing. Swiftly about its edge he circled, to thwart a last dash of his prey for the glad, free grazing life from which she had so summarily been withdrawn. Half-round the clearing they went in the startled gaze of a person who had been at work over a deer-hide in the shade of a mighty hemlock. Then, with lightning swerve, pursued and pursuers fled straight and swiftly across the clearing—Cooney close on the flanks of his prize—into the astounded vision of Ewing's kid, who had sauntered to the open door at the sound of flying hoofs.

Hereupon the little roan abandoned his task, halting before the figure in the doorway. The halt was so abrupt that Mrs. Laithe never knew whether she dismounted or was thrown.

They looked at each other helplessly, the lady's eyes still wide with the dismay that had been growing in them

since Cooney's mysterious seizure. She felt herself trembling, and she tried to smile. The young man released the arm he had seized to support her, and stepped back, putting a hand up to Cooney, who had been mouthing his sleeve with little whimsies of rejoicing.

Then the lady heard the voice of Ewing's kid, heard him say, with quick, embarrassed utterance: "It's too bad you went to all that trouble. We're not milking Clara any more."

Still breathing rapidly, she turned half-away, confused by this cryptic utterance.

"Clara?—I didn't know—I don't—I beg your pardon, but I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Yes, we don't drive her in any more. Midge came in fresh a few weeks ago, and we let Clara run along with her calf again."

Pondering this item, she put her hands to her head. One of them found her cap which a low branch had raked awry; the other grasped a tangle of hair that muffled the other side of her head, regrettably out of place. From this surprising touch of things she divined the picture she must be making. She sank—collapsed, rather—upon the broad slab of stone before the door, laughing weakly.

The youth looked down at her with puzzled eyes, in which she saw alarm rising.

"But I didn't try to chase your cow—I didn't want to," she broke out. "It was your horse; *his* idea, his alone."

There was such fine, shy commiseration in his face as she rose that she laughed again.

"Of course it must have been Cooney's fault," he said. "I might have known that. He used to have to drive her in every day." He regarded her for a moment with a sort of dumb chivalry, then politely offered his hand, saying, with a curious little air of taught formality: "I'm very glad to see you. Thank you so much for coming!"

"If I may have a glass of water—" she suggested, as a device for establishing ease between them.

"Of course!" He called to the per-

son under the tree. The face turned upon them was rigidly sad, a face of almost saturnine solemnity, the face of one who has been brought to view life as an engine of woe. As he ambled dejectedly toward them, his head bowed from his work-bent shoulders, the lines of grief in his face seemed to deepen, and a gnarled hand tugged at the already drooping ends of his long mustache, as if he would be assured that they, also, testified to the world's objectionableness.

"Mr. Crider, this is Mrs. Laithe—she has come to see us." The youth achieved this with austere formality. The sad one nodded and put forth his hand—with a funereal "Glad to know you, ma'am!" as if they met at the open grave of a friend.

"Ben, won't you go to the spring and get her some fresh water? She's thirsty. She's had a hard ride."

The other turned quickly away, and there was a sound as if he had manfully stifled a sob. Ewing faced his guest with eyes that twinkled at bit, she thought, beneath their apologetic droop.

"I'd be glad to have you come inside," he ventured.

CHAPTER III.

From the first room, a kitchen and general living-room, such as she had learned to know in the other ranch-houses, he conducted her up two steps to a doorway, from which he pushed aside a Navajo blanket with its rude coloring of black and red. There was disclosed beyond this an apartment of a sort with which she was more familiar, a spacious studio with its large window giving to the north. In the clear light her eyes ran quickly over its details; the chinked logs that made its walls, the huge stone fireplace on one side, the broad couch along the opposite wall, covered with another of the vivid Navajo weaves, the skins of bear and lynx and cougar on the stained floor, the easel before the window, a canvas in place on it; the branching antlers

over the fireplace, contrived into a gun-rack; a tall, roughly made cabinet, its single shelf littered with half-squeezed tubes of paint, a daubed palette, and a red-glazed jar from which brushes protruded. Above the couch were some shelves of books, and between it and the fireplace was a table strewn with papers, magazines, a drawing-board with a sheet of paper tacked to it, and half a dozen sharpened pencils.

He indicated the couch. "It will be a good thing for you to rest a little," he said. She seated herself, with a smile of assent. He rashly began to arrange the pillows for her, but left off in a sudden-consciousness of his temerity, withdrawing a few paces to regard her. He was still apprehensive, but his boy's eyes were full of delight, amusement, curiosity, and, more than all, of a wistfulness like that of a dumb creature. He stepped to the door for the pitcher of water and glass that Ben now brought.

She had studied him coolly as he spoke—the negligent out-of-doors carriage of the figure, not without a kind of free animal grace, the grace of a trampling horse rather than that of soft-going panthers. The floor boards echoed to his careless rattling tread, and occasionally, his attention being drawn to this reverberation, he was at great pains for a moment to go on tiptoe. He was well set up, with a sufficient length of thigh. Mrs. Laithe approved of this, for, in her opinion, many a goodly masculine torso in these times goes for nothing because of a shortness of leg. His hair was a lightish brown and very straight. His face was a long, browned square, with gray eyes, so embedded under the brow that they had a look of fierceness. His lips showed only a narrow line of color, and trembled constantly with smiles. These he tried to restrain from time to time, with an air of pinning down the corners of his mouth.

She had noted so much while he poured out the water, and now he came to her, walking carefully so as not to thunder with his boots.

"You must have been frightened," he

said, and his eyes sought hers with a young, sorry look.

"Not after we left the woods; it wasn't funny among those trees."

He brightened. "I'd always thought women don't like to look funny."

"They don't," said the lady incisively, "no more than men do."

"But you can laugh at yourself," he insisted.

"Can you?" She meditated a swift exposure of his own absurdity at their meetings in the valley, but forbore, and spoke instead of his pictures.

"You must show me your work," she said.

For a moment it seemed that she had lost all she had gained with him. He patiently meditated a flying leap through the door and an instant vanishing into the nearest thicket.

She looked cunningly away, examining a rip in her glove.

"I tried to paint a little myself once," she essayed craftily. Nothing came of it. He remained in ambush.

"But it wasn't in me," she continued, and was conscious that he at least took a breath.

"You see, I hadn't anything but the liking," she went on, "and so I had the sense to give it up. Still, I learned enough to help me see other people's work better—and to be interested in pictures."

"Did any one try to teach you?" he asked.

"Yes, but they couldn't make me paint; they could only make me see."

"Perhaps you could tell me some things," he admitted at last, "if you've tried." He faltered a little longer. Then: "Ben Crider says this is the best thing I've ever done," and he quickly took a canvas from against the wall and placed it on a chair before her.

She considered it so quietly that he warmed a little, like a routed animal lulled once more into security by the stillness.

"Did you get the right light?" he asked anxiously.

She nodded, and managed a faint, abstracted smile, indicative of pleasure. She heard him emit a sigh of returning

ease. He spoke in almost his former confiding tone.

"That's our lake, you know, painted in the late afternoon. Ben is set on my sending it down to the Durango fair next month."

It was the lake, indeed, but, alas! an elaborate, a labored parody of it. The dead blue water, the granite wall evenly gray in shadow, garishly pink where it caught the sun, the opaque green of the trees, the carefully arranged clouds in the flat blue sky—all smirked conscious burlesque.

Mrs. Laithe knew the artist's eyes were upon her in appeal for praise. She drew in her under lip and narrowed her eyes as one in the throes of critical deliberation.

"Yes, I should recognize the spot at once," she dared to say at last. "How well you've drawn the rock!"

"I'd hoped you'd like it. I don't mind telling you I put in a lot of time on that thing. I 'carried it along,' as my father used to say. I don't believe I could better that. And here are some others."

He displayed them without further urging, his shyness vanished by his enthusiasm, in his eye a patent confusion of pride and anxiety. She found them in quality like the first.

"They are immensely interesting," observed his critic, with animation. "It may be"—she searched for a tempering phrase—"it is just possible there's a trick of color you need to learn yet. You know color is so difficult to convict. It's shifty, evasive, impalpable. I dare say that lake isn't as flatly blue as you've painted it, nor that cliff as flatly pink in sunlight. And those hills—isn't there a mistiness that softens their lines and gives one a sense of their distance? Color is *so* difficult—*so* tricky!"

She had spoken rapidly, her eyes keeping to the poor things before her. Now she ventured a glance at the painter and met a puzzled seriousness in his look.

"You may be right," he assented at last. "Sometimes I've felt I was on the wrong track. I see what you mean.

My father warned me about color. And I never saw any good pictures but his, and that was years ago. I've forgotten how they ought to look. He sold all his when I was young—all but one."

"You've done well, considering that."

"He said I must learn to draw first—really to draw—and he taught me to do that. I *can* draw. But black and white is so dingy, and these colors are always nagging you, daring you to try them. If I could only learn to get real air between me and those hills. I wonder, now, if my colors seem like those Navajo blankets to you." He flung himself away from the canvases like an offended horse.

"Let me see your black and whites," she suggested hastily.

"Oh, those! They don't amount to much, but I'll show you." He thrust aside the canvases and opened a portfolio on the chair.

She saw at a glance that he had been right when he said he could draw. She let her surprise have play, and expanded in the pleasure of honest praise. She had not realized how her former disappointment had taken her aback. But he could draw. Here were true lines and true modeling, not dead, as he had warned her, but quick with life, portrayed not only with truth but with a handling all his own, free from imitative touches. He had achieved difficult feats of action, of foreshortening, with an apparently effortless facility—the duck of a horse's head to avoid the thrown rope; the poise of the man who had cast it; the braced tension of a cowboy holding a roped and thrown steer while his rider dismounted; the airy grace of Red Phinney at work with a stubborn bronco, coming to earth on his stiff-legged mount and raking its side from shoulder to flank with an effective spur. There was humor in them, and real feeling in one of the last. Mrs. Laithe lingered over this.

"It's Beulah Pierce's wife in that flower garden of hers," the artist explained. "It seems kind of sad when she goes out there alone sometimes. You know how tired she generally is, and how homesick she's been for twenty

years or so—all gaunted up,' as Ben says, like every ranchman's wife—they have to work so hard. And in the house she's apt to be peevish and scold Beulah and the boys like she despised them. But when she goes out into that garden—"

"Tell me," said his listener, after waiting discreetly a moment.

"Well, she's mighty different. She stands around mooning at the hollyhocks and petunias and geraniums and things, the flowers that grew in her garden back East, and I reckon she kind of forgets, and thinks she's a girl back home again. Her face gets all gentled up. I've watched her when she didn't notice me—she's looking so far off—and when she goes into the house again her voice is queer, and she forgets to rampage till Shane Riley lets the stew burn, or Beulah tracks mud into the front room, or something. I tried to show her there, looking soft, just that way." He sounded a little apologetic as he finished.

"It's delightful," she insisted, "and they're all good—I can't tell you how good. You must do more of them, and"—she paused and shot him a careful glance to determine how wary it behooved her to be—"and I believe you should let color alone for a while, until you've had a teacher show you some things. You must learn the trick."

"Oh, I'd try to learn, fast enough, if I had the chance." His eyes lighted with a kind of furtive wistfulness, as if he would not have her wholly fathom his longing.

"Of course you could learn. I believe you can do something—something fine."

She rose from the couch and glanced over his books, with an air of wishing to touch other matters before they dwelt long on this. She noticed with some surprise a set of Meredith.

"Do you read these?" she asked, taking down one of the volumes.

There was an instant return of his former shyness, a hint of the child and the invaded playhouse. But she knew what to do. Without further remark she calmly lost herself in "Diana."

"Those books were my father's," he

said at last, with the air of addressing an explanation to some third person. She ignored this, not even glancing at him. "But I've read them," he added, still as if to another person.

At last, after studying her face a bit, he ventured: "Have you read them all?" He spoke low, so as not to interrupt her too pointedly. She did not look up, but nodded, with a smile that said confidentially: "Well, I should think so!" He edged nearer then, like one who would be glad, if pressed, to share his secrets.

"I was sorry when I reached the last one," he began. "It was another world. Oh, he's a great writer. But he writes as if he didn't care whether anybody understood him or not. It's a blind trail, lots of the way, and on some pages I just bog down."

She smiled sympathetically. "Many of us have that trouble with him." She put "Diana" back on the shelf and held up the poems of Robert Browning.

"And this?"

"Oh, do you read that, too?" he counterquestioned with sparkling curiosity. She could see that he was enlivened beyond his self-consciousness for the moment. "Well, I do, too, in spots. He's pretty good in spots. But other times he's choppy and talky and has a hard time getting into the saddle."

"And this you like, too?" She was opening a volume of Whitman.

"Sure!" he rang out. "Don't you? There's the man." He began walking about with a fine smile that was almost a friendly grin. She felt suddenly sure that he had never talked about the books before, and that it was a kind of feast day for him.

"Yes," he continued easily; "when I get to feeling too much alone up here I pretend I see him striding in off the trail, his head up, sniffing the air, his eyes just *cating* these big hills, and he'd march right in and sit down. Only I can't ever think of what we'd say. I reckon we'd sit here without a word. He must have had wonderful eyes. He's good in winters when you're holed up here in the snow and get on edge with nothing to do for five or six

months but feed the stock and keep a water-hole open. Sometimes I wonder if Ben and I won't come out crazy in the spring, and then I read old Whitman, and he makes me feel all easy-like and sure of myself."

He stopped, and they stood a moment smiling at each other. Then she went back to the couch with rather a businesslike air.

"How old are you?" she asked.

"I'm twenty-four. How old are you?"

She smiled, quite disarmed by the artlessness of this brutality.

"I am twenty-seven."

"That's pretty old, isn't it?" he commented gravely. "I shouldn't have said you were older than I am. Some ways you look younger. And what a lot you must have seen out yonder!"

"You should go there yourself, to work, to study." She felt that he was curiously watching her lips as she spoke, rather than listening to her.

"Now I see it's only your profile that's sad," he began in the same detached, absent way he had spoken of the books, the way of one talking in solitude. "Your full face isn't sad; it's full of joy; but there's a droop to the profile. Here—I'll show you." He took a sketch-book from the table.

"I'll show you this, now we're such good friends. I could only draw the profile because—well, that was the only thing I could look at much."

She looked, and saw herself on three pages of the book, quick little drawings, all of the side face.

"I didn't dream you had seen me enough," she said. "And you have everything from cap to boots, and Cooney—"

"I knew Cooney, and I've—well—I've watched you some when you didn't know."

"Certainly you never watched me when I did know," she retorted.

"I should think not!" He laughed uneasily. "But you see the sadness there. I tried to locate it, but I couldn't. I only knew it was there because I found it in the sketches when they were done. I think I caught the

figure pretty well in that one. Stand that way now, won't you?"

She arose graciously.

"Here's your quirt, and catch your skirts the way you've done there—that's it. Yes, I got that long line down from the shoulder. It's a fine line. You are beautiful," he continued critically. "I like the way your neck goes up from your shoulders, and your head has a perky kind of tilt, as if you wouldn't be easy to bluff."

She smiled, meditating some jocose retort, but he still surveyed her impersonally, not seeing the smile. She dropped to the couch rather quickly.

"Let us talk about you," she urged. But he did not hear.

"Your face, though—that's the fine thing—" * He was scanning it with narrowed eyes. But a protesting movement of hers restored him to his normal embarrassment. He writhed in uncomfortable apology before her. "I'd most forgot you were really here," he explained. "I've seen you that way so often when you *weren't* here. There now—I see that sadness; it's in the upper lip. It showed even when you laughed then."

"Really, this must stop," she broke in. "People don't talk this way."

"Don't they? Why don't they? I'm sorry—but all that interested me." The wave of his hand indicated the fluent grace of the lady impartially from head to foot.

"Of course," he added, "I knew there must be people like you, out there, but I never dreamed I'd have one of them close enough to look at—let alone get friendly with. I hope you won't hold it against me."

CHAPTER IV.

Though she had made him tingle with an impulse to flee from her, he was at the edge of the east bench early the next afternoon. He might see her from a distance. If she came close upon him—well, it was worth risking: he had a good horse. Her eyes were the best of

her, he thought, big gray things under black brows, with a dark ring, well defined, about the iris. He had seen no such eyes before. And how they lighted her face when she spoke. Her face needed lighting, he thought. It was pale under the dark hair—her hair stopped short of being black, and was lusterless—with only a bit of scared pink in her cheeks, after that ride of the day before. He thought of her hands, too. They were the right hands for her, long, slender, and strong, he did not doubt, under a tricky look of being delicate. It was not possible that they could ever talk together again so easily. He could not make that seem true, but he could look at her.

He had hoped she would promise to come again, but they had parted abruptly the afternoon before. Riding back with her, as they breasted the last slope leading to the ranch, he had rejoiced boldly at the chance that had led her up the lake trail that morning. Then Beulah Pierce had hailed them from his station at the bars, hailed them in a voice built to admirable carrying power by many cattle drives. His speech began: "Didn't I tell you where that upper trail would—"

Whereupon the lady turned to dismiss her escort rather curtly.

"Thank you for riding back with me. I shall not trouble you any further." And he, staring suddenly at her with the wild deer's eyes again, had fled over the back trail.

He thought if there had been more time she might have said: "I will come again soon—perhaps to-morrow." He liked to think she might have said that, but he could not give it much reality.

He sprawled easily in the saddle, leaning his crossed arms on the pommel and gazing out over the sun-shot valley to the group of buildings and corrals at Bar-7. At least she rode somewhere every afternoon, and he would see her leave.

A half-hour he waited so, beholding visions of their accidental meeting. Then his pulses raced. He saw the stocky-barreled Cooney led from corral to the front of the house by Red Phinney.

He could not see her mount. The ranch-house hid that spectacle. But she rode into view presently, putting Cooney first to his little fox-trot and then to a lope, as the road wound among the willows.

He straightened in the saddle as she reached the creek. He was eager to retreat, yet feared to have his cowardice detected. And when Cooney halted, midway of the stream, pawing its rocky bed and making a pretense of thirst, the woman looked up and saw her watcher on the trail. She waved the gauntleted hand that held her quirt, and he found himself holding his hat in his hand with an affectation of ease. Then each laughed, and, though neither could hear the other, it was as if they had laughed together in some little flurry of understanding. He could still pretend to have happened there at that moment, he reflected. And this brought him courage as he saw her give Cooney his way where the trail branched.

When the little horse had carried her to the summit and stood in panting gratitude, the waiting youth evolved a splendid plan for hiding his fright. He dismounted and forced himself to go coolly and take her hand. Perhaps it was as well that he had not trusted himself to remain in the saddle at that first moment. But when the thing was really over he no longer made a secret of his delight at her coming. His first anxious look at her face had shown him the cordial friendliness of the preceding day. She was amused by him, he could see that, and did not resent it; but she was kind, and in his joy at this he habbled, at first, with little coherence.

"I rode right over here to make sure I would see you," he began, "and then if you rode down the valley, or up. I was going to loaf along and find you by accident, and pretend I was hunting a colt. I was going to be afraid the mountain lions had got it." He laughed immoderately at this joke. "And while I waited for you I kept trying to think how fine it would have sounded last night if you had said: 'I think I shall go over and look at your place again to-morrow.' I couldn't make your voice

sound true, though. It's a good thing we needn't try to paint voices."

They were riding together over the first stretch of meadow. It seemed to have been agreed without words that they should ride to the lake cabin.

"To paint voices?" she queried.

"Voices, yes; how could yours be painted? It couldn't. You'll see that. I thought of a jumble of things—wine and velvet, for instance; some kind of rich, golden wine and purple velvet, and then, warm flickers of light in a darkened room, and a big bronze bell struck with something soft that would muffle it and yet make everything about it tremble. You see, don't you?" he concluded, with a questioning look of deep seriousness.

His own voice was low and eager, with its undertone of wistfulness. Already he had renewed upon her that companionable charm which she had felt the day before, a charm compounded of half-shy directness, of flashes of self-forgetfulness, of quick-trusting comradeship. She rejected a cant phrase of humorous disclaimer that habit brought to her lips. It would puzzle or affront his forthrightness.

"Very well, we'll agree that my voice can't be painted," she said at last. "So let us talk of you."

"I guess I should like that pretty well," he answered, after a moment's pondering. "I don't believe I've ever talked much; but now I feel as if I could tire you out, talking as we did yesterday. Queer, wasn't it?"

He fell silent, however, as they rode along, as if the acknowledgment of his desire to speak had somehow quenched it.

They were skirting the lake now, a glinting oval of sapphire in its setting of granite. Beyond this they rode through the thinned timber—where Cooney was dissuaded, not without effort, from pursuing his ancient charge, and emerged into the glare of the clearing.

As they dismounted at the door of the cabin a melancholy of minor chords from a guitar came to their ears, and a voice, nasal, but vibrant with emo-

tion, sang the final couplet of what had too plainly been a ballad of pathos:

While they were honeymooning in a mansion on the hill,
Kind friends were laying Nellie out behind the mill.

"That's one of Ben's best songs," said Ewing, with so genuine a gravity that he stifled quite another emotion in the lady as she caught his look.

"Indeed! I must hear him sing more," she managed with some difficulty.

The sorrowful one arose as they entered, hastily thrusting aside his guitar as might an assassin have cast away his weapon. He greeted the visitor as one who would say: "Yes, it's a sad affair—wholly unexpected," and, cocking an eye of long-suffering negation on Ewing, he went out to the horses.

As they entered the studio Mrs. Laithe saw that the easel had been wheeled into the light from the big window and that a woman's portrait had been placed upon it. Had Ewing looked at her on the instant he might have detected that her face seemed to ripple under some wind of emotion. But his own eyes had been on the portrait.

"That's my mother," he said, unconsciously hushing his voice.

"I should have known it," she answered, with a kind of spurious animation; "the face is so much like yours. It is a face one seems to have known before, one of those elusive resemblances that haunt the mind. It is well done." She ended the speech glibly enough.

"She was beautiful. My father did it. He had that trick of color, as you call it, or he could never have painted her; she was so slight, but she had color. And she was quick and fiery. I used to see her rage when I was very small. I believed there were coals in her eyes, and that something blew on them inside to make them blaze."

They looked in silence at the vivid young face on the canvas, a thin, daring, eager face, a face of delicate features, but strong in a perfect balance. The eyes were darkly alive.

"You were young when she died?" the woman asked, at last.

"Too young to understand. I was eight, I think. There was a lot I shall never understand. Sometimes my father would tell me about their life here in the West, but never of the time before they came here. It always seemed to me that either he or she had quarreled with their people. They were poor when they came here. We lived in Leadville when I first remember. My mother sang in a church choir and made a little money, and nights—you'll think this queer—my father played a piano in a dance-hall. They had to live. Days he painted. He had studied abroad in Paris and Munich, but he wasn't selling his pictures then. It took him years to do much of that. Sometimes they were hungry, though I didn't know it." He paused, overwhelmed by a sudden realization that he was talking much.

"Tell me more," she said very quietly. "I wish to hear the rest."

"Well, at the last my mother was in bed a long time, and my father worked hard to get things for her, things she must have. But one night she died—it was a cold night in winter. He and I were alone with her. I'll not soon forget that. I sat up on the cot where I slept and saw my father sitting on the bed looking down at my mother. They were both still, and he wouldn't answer or turn his head when I spoke.

"He was sitting the same way when I woke in the morning, still looking at my mother's face. Even when the people came to take her away he kept silent—and while they put her in the ground in a great snowy field with little short waves all over it. And when we were back in the cabin, not a word could I get from him, nor a look. He just sat on the bed again, looking at the pillow.

"In the evening some one brought a letter. I lighted a candle and took this letter to him, crowding it into his hand. I wanted him to notice me. I saw him look at the envelope, then tear it open and look at a little slip of green paper that fell out. It was money, you understand, for pictures he had sent to

New York. I knew this at once. I'd heard them talk of its coming, and of wonderful things they'd do with it when it did come. I was glad in an instant, for I thought that now we could get my mother back out of the ground. I shouted 'Hurry—let's hurry and bring her back—let me carry the money!' He caught my shoulder and looked so astonished, then he burst into a loud laugh, after he'd made me say it over. I ran for his overcoat, too, but when I came with it I saw he wasn't laughing at all. He was crying, and it was so much like his laugh that I hadn't noticed the change."

He had kept his eyes on the portrait while he spoke. He stopped abruptly now, turning to the listening woman, searching her face with new signs of confusion.

"I—I didn't know I was telling you all that."

She did not answer at once.

"And you came here after that?" she said at last.

"Yes; my father found this place. He wanted to be alone. I think he began to die when my mother went. He couldn't live without her. He taught me what he could about books and pictures, but I couldn't have been much to him. I think it hurt him that I looked like her—he said I looked like her. He worked on that portrait to the morning of the day he died."

"What was your father's name?"

"Gilbert Denham Ewing. I was named for him."

"And your mother's name before marriage was—"

"I'm ashamed that I never knew. It must have been spoken often, but I was so young; it never stayed in my mind. And a little while before he died my father burned all his letters and papers. I've wondered about their life long ago before I came, but I think my father meant me not to know. He had some reason."

"I am glad you have told me all you did know," she said.

"But you have made *me* glad," he assured her, returning to his livelier manner.

"Your mother's first name," she asked; "what did your father call her?"

"Oh, that—Katharine. He called her Kitty."

"Kitty!" She repeated it after him softly, as if she spoke it in compassion to the portrait.

"But see," he continued, "it's late. Stay and eat with us, and I'll take you back by moonlight. I've ordered a fine big silver moon to be set up in the sky at seven, and Ben is already getting supper."

He pulled aside the blanket portière, and through the doorway she could see the saturnine one—a man fashioned for tragedies, for deeds of desperate hazard—incongruously busied with a pan of soda-biscuits and a hissing broiler.

When they rode back to Bar-7 the hills were struck to silver by the moon. They were companionably silent for most of the ride, though the youth from time to time, when the trail narrowed to put him in the rear, crooned stray bits of a song with which Ben Crider had favored them while he prepared the evening meal. The lines Mrs. Laithe remembered were:

Take back your gold, for gold it cannot buy
me;
Make me your wife, 'tis all I ask of you.

When they parted she said: "You must think about leaving here. It's time you rode out into the world. I think my brother will be back from his cattle-driving trip to-morrow, and I mean to bring him to see your pictures very soon. Perhaps he will suggest something for you."

"This moonlight does such wonderful things to your face," he remarked.

"Good night! I'm sorry you have so far to go."

"It isn't far enough," he answered, still searching her face. "Not half far enough—I have so much thinking—so much thinking to do."

CHAPTER V.

It was not without concern that Mrs. Laithe awaited the return of her brother the following day. The cattle drive that

had beguiled him from habits of extreme and enforced precision had occupied a fortnight, and she understood the life to be sorely trying to any but the rugged. Earnestly had she sought to dissuade him from the adventure, for insomnia had long beset him, and dyspepsia marked him for its plaything. Eloquently exposed to him had been the folly of hoping for sleep on stony ground after vainly wooing it in the softest of beds with an air-pillow inflated to the nice degree of resiliency. And the unsuitability of camp fare to a man who had long been sustained by an invalid's diet had been shrewdly set forth. None the less, he had persisted, caught in the frenzy of desperation that sometimes overwhelms even the practised dyspeptic.

"It can't be worse, sis," he had tragically assured her at parting. "If I've got to writhe out my days, why, I shall writhe like a gentleman, that's all. I can at least chuck those baby foods and perish with some dignity."

When Mrs. Pierce loudly announced the return of the men early in the afternoon, therefore, the invalid's sister was ready to be harrowed. There would be bitter agonies to relate—chiefly stomachic. She had heroically resolved, moreover, not immediately to flay the surface of her sympathy with any gusty "I told you so!"

At the call of Mrs. Pierce she ran down the flower-bordered walk to join that lady at the gate, and there they watched the cavalcade as it jolted down the lacets of the mesa trail—four horsemen in single file, two laden pack-animals, another horseman in the rear. The returning invalid was equal, then, to sitting a horse. The far-focused eyes of Mrs. Pierce were the first to identify him. As the line advanced through the willow growth that fringed the creek she said, pointing: "There's Mr. Bartell—he's in the lead."

"But Clarence doesn't smoke; the doctors won't let him," his sister interposed, for she could distinguish a pipe in the mouth of the foremost horseman. "And, anyway, it couldn't be Clarence; it's too—" On the point of saying

"too disreputable," she reflected that the person in front looked quite like the run of Mrs. Pierce's nearest friends, and might, indeed, be of her own household.

"It's sure your brother, though," insisted Mrs. Pierce, as the riders broke into a lope over the level; "and he *don't* look quite as—" Mrs. Pierce forbore tactfully in her turn. She had meant to say "dandified."

"And I tell you, Mis' Laithe, he does look husky, too. Not no ways so squammish as when he started. My suz! Here we've et dinner, and they'll be hungry as bears. I must run in and set back something."

The other men turned with pack-horses off toward the corrals, but Bartell came on at a stiff gallop to where his sister waited. When he had pulled his horse up before her with perilous but showy abruptness, he raised himself in the saddle, swung his hat, and poured into the still air of the valley a long, high yell of such volume that his sister stepped hastily within the gate again.

"Why, Clarence, *dear!*" she gasped. But he hurriedly dismounted and came to kiss her. She submitted to this, and immediately held him off for inspection. He was frankly disreputable. The flannel shirt and corduroy trousers were torn, bedraggled, gray with the dust of the trail; his boots were past redemption, his hat a reproach; his face a bronzed and hairy caricature; and he reeked of the most malignant tobacco Mrs. Laithe had ever encountered. Only the gold-rimmed spectacles, the near-sighted, peering gray eyes, and a narrow zone of white forehead under his hat-brim served to recall the somewhat fastidious, sedate, and rather oldish-looking young man who had parted from her.

He smiled at her with a complacency that made it almost a smirk. Then he boisterously kissed her again before she could evade him, and uttered once more that yell of lawless abandon.

"Clarence!" she expostulated, but he waved her to silence with an imperious hand.

"Quickest way to tell the story, Nell—that's my *pæn* of victory. Sleep?"

Slept like a night-watchman. Eat? I debauched myself with the rowdiest sort of food every chance I got—fried bacon, boiled beans, baking-powder biscuit, black coffee that would bite your finger off—couldn't get enough; smoked when I wasn't eating or sleeping; drank raw whisky, too—whisky that would etch copper. Work? I worked harder than a Coney Island piano-player; fell over asleep at night and got up asleep in the morning—when they kicked me the third time. And I galloped up and down cliffs after runaway steers, where I wouldn't have crawled on my hands and knees two weeks before. And now that whole bunch of boys treat me like one of themselves."

He broke off to light the evil pipe ostentatiously, while she watched him open-eyed, not yet equal to speech.

"Now run in like a good girl and see if Ma Pierce has plenty of fragments from the noonday feast. Anything at all—I could eat a deer-hide with the hair on."

Wavering incredulously, she left to do his bidding.

After he had eaten, he slouched into a hammock on the veranda with extravagant groans of repletion, and again lighted his pipe. His sister promptly removed her chair beyond the line of its baleful emanations.

"Well, sis," he began, "that trip sure did for me good and plenty. Me for the high country uninterrupted hereafter!"

She regarded him with an amused smile.

"I'm so glad, dear, about the health. It's a miracle, but don't overdo it; don't attempt everything at once. And the trip 'sure' seems to have 'done' you in another way—how is it—'good and plenty'? You walk like a cowboy and talk and act generally like one—"

"Do I, really, though?" A sort of half-shamed pleasure glowed in his eyes. "Do I seem like the real thing, honestly, now?"

She reassured him, laughing frankly.

"Well, you needn't laugh. It's all fixed—I'm going to be one."

"But, Clarence, not for long, surely!"

"It's all settled, I tell you. I've bought a ranch; old Swede Peterson's place over on Pine River; corking spot, three half-sections under fence and ditch, right at the mouth of a box cañon, where nobody can get in above me, plenty of water, plenty of free range close at hand."

"Clarence Bartell, you're—what do you call it?—stringing."

"Not a bit of it. Wait till I come on in about two years, after selling a train-load of fat steers at Omaha or Kansas City—sasshaying down Fifth Avenue and rounding into Ninth Street with my big hat and long-shanked spurs, and a couple of forty-fours booming into the air. You'll see; and won't dad say it's duced unpleasant!"

"But I'll not believe until I see."

He spoke ruminantly between pulls at the pipe.

"Lots of things to do now, though. Got to go down to Pagosa this week to pay over the money, get the deed, and register my brand." How does 'Bar-B' strike you? Rather neat, yes? It'll make a tasty little monogram on the three hundred critters I start with. I'm on track of a herd of shorthorns already. I'm fixed for life. You and dad won't laugh at me any more. Come on out now and see me throw a rope, if you don't believe me. I've been practising every day. And say, you didn't happen to notice the diamond hitch on that forward packhorse, did you? Well, I'm the boy that did most of that."

She followed him dutifully to the corrals, and for half an hour watched him hurl thirty feet of rope at the horned skull of a steer nailed to the top of a post. When the noose settled over this mark his boyish delight was supreme. When it flew wide, which was oftener, his look was one of invincible determination.

As his sister left him he was explaining to Red Phinney, who had sauntered up to be a help in the practise, that the range of Bar-B had a lucky lie—no "greaser" could come along and "sheep" him.

But conscience pricked him at length to leave that fascinating adventurer

and to condescend for an interval to mere brotherhood. He found his sister alone in the "front" room, ensconced on the bearskin rug before a snapping and fragrant fire of cedar wood.

He drew up the wooden rocker, and remarked that the fire smelled like a thousand burning lead-pencils. He would have gone on to talk of his great experience, but the woman wisely forestalled him.

"Clarence," she began directly. "I've been thinking over that old affair of Randall Teevan and his wife, Kitty Lowndes, you know. Do you happen to recall the name of the man—the man Kitty went away with?"

"Lord, no! That was before I'd learned to remember anything. If you want to rake that affair up, ask Randy Teevan himself. I'll wager he hasn't forgotten the chap's name. But why desecrate the grave of so antique a scandal? Ask me about something later. I remember we had a cook once, when I was six—"

"Because—because I was thinking, just thinking. Are you certain you remember nothing about it, not even the man's name, nor what sort of man he was, nor what he did, nor anything?"

"I only know what you must know. Randall Teevan's wife decided that the bishop had made two into the wrong one. I doubt if I ever heard the chap's name. I seem to remember that they took Alden with them—he was a baby of four or five, I believe, and that Randy scurried about and got him back after no end of fuss. I've heard dad speak of that."

"Did Kitty and that man ever marry?"

"No; you can be sure Teevan saw to that. He took precious good care not to divorce her."

"And did you never know anything more about them, where they lived, or how they ended?"

"Never a thing, sis. It's all so old everybody's forgotten it, except Teevan. Of course he'd not forget the only woman who ever really put a lance through his shirt-of-mail vanity."

"You forget Kitty's mother. She remembers."

"That's so, by Jove! Teevan got what was coming to him; he got his 'come-uppance,' as the boys say; but old Kitty—yes, it was rough on her. But she's always put a great face on it. No one would know if they *didn't* know."

"She's proud. Even though she's been another mother to me, she rarely lets me see anything, and she's tried so hard to find comfort in Kitty's boy, in Alden. She's failed in that, though, for some reason."

Her brother glanced sharply at her. "I'll tell you why she's failed, Nell. Alden Teevan wasn't designed to be a comfort to any one, not even to himself. There was too much Teevan in him at the start, and too much Teevan went into his raising."

"They're back in town, you know."

"Yes: Teevan must have realized that old Kitty is getting on in years, and has a bit of money for Alden. Say, sis, I hate to seem prying, but you don't—you're not thinking about Alden Teevan seriously, are you? Come, let's be confidential for twenty seconds."

She mused a moment, then faced him frankly.

"There's something I like in Alden, and something I don't. I know what I like and I don't know what I don't like—I only feel it. There!"

He reached over to take one of her hands.

"Well, sis, you trust to the feeling. You couldn't be happy there. And you deserve something fine, poor child! You deserve to be happy again." His inner eye looked back six years to see the body of poor Dick Laithe carried into the Adirondack camp by two silent guides, who had found him where a stray bullet left him.

She turned a tired, smiling face into the light.

"I was happy, so happy; yet I wonder if you can understand how vague it seems now. It was so brief and ended so terribly. I think the shock of it made me another woman. Dick and I seem like a boy and girl I once knew who laughed and played childish games,

and never became real. I find myself sympathizing with them sometimes, as I would with two dear young things in a story that ended sadly."

He awkwardly stroked and patted the hand he still held.

"Come and live with me, 'Nell. There's only a one-room cabin at that place now, with a carpet of hay on the dirt floor. But I'll have a mansion there next summer that will put the eye out of this shack at Bar-7. I believe in getting back to nature, but I don't want to land clear the other side of her. You'd be comfy with me. And it's a great life; not a line of dyspepsia in it. And think of *feeling* yourself sliding off to sleep the moment you touch the pillow, as plainly as you feel yourself going down in an elevator. That reminds me, I'm going to bed down with the boys in the bunk-house. I'm afraid to trust myself in that bed up-stairs again—I've lain awake there so many nights."

For a time she lost the thread of his rambling talk, busied with her own thoughts. What at last brought her back was a yawn and his remark that he must "hole up" for the night.

"Clarence," she began, looking far into a little white-hot chamber between two half-burned logs, "listen, please, and advise me. If you were going to do something that might, just possibly, and not by any means certainly, rake up rather an ugly mess, in a sort of remote way—that might make some people uncomfortable, you understand—I mean if you saw something that ought to be done, because the person deserved it, and it was by no means that person's fault, not in the least, and the person didn't even know about it nor suspect anything, would you stop because it might be painful to some one else—just possibly it might—or to a number of people, or even to the person himself, after he knew? Or would you go ahead and trust to luck, especially when there's a chance that it mightn't ever come out? —though I'm quite sure it's true, you see, and that's what makes it so hard to know what to do."

She looked up at him with bright ex-

pectancy. Clutching his head with both hands, he stared at her, alarm leaping in his eyes.

"I might have known you couldn't understand," she said regretfully; "but I can't possibly be more explicit. I thought if I stated the case clearly in the abstract—but I dare say it's a waste of time to ask advice in such matters."

"You've wasted yours, my child, if that's the last chance I get. Do you really want help about something?"

"No, dear, it wasn't anything. Never mind."

"All right, if you say so. And now me for the blankets!"

When he had gone she stepped out into the night under the close, big stars. She breathed deeply of the thin, sharp air, and looked over at the luminous pearl of a moon that seemed to hang above the cabin where Ewing's kid would doubtless be dreaming. Her lips fell into a little smile, half-cynical, half-tender.

"I'll do it, anyway!" The inflection was defiant, but the words were scarcely more than a whisper. She said them again, giving them tone.

CHAPTER VI.

They were chatting the next morning over the late breakfast of Mrs. Laithe. Her brother, summoned from the branding-pen, where tender and terrified calves were being marked for life, had come reluctantly, ill-disposed to forego the vivacity of that scene. He had rushed in with the look of a man harassed by large affairs. He drew a chair up to the oilcloth-covered table, and surveyed the meager fare of his sister with high disapproval.

"What you need is food, Nell," he began abruptly. "Look at me. This morning I ate two pounds of oatmeal, three wide slices of ham, five chunks of hot bread, about two thousand beans, and drank all the coffee I could get—and never foundered. How's that against one silly glass of malted milk two weeks ago?"

But his sister was for once unresponsive.

"Clarence," she began, as if reciting lines she had learned, "there's a chap over on the next ranch—Ewing's his name—that ought to have something done for him. He's young, twenty-four, I believe, and boyish even for that age, but he draws; draws well. His father was a painter who died here years ago, and the boy has lived in these mountains ever since. His father taught him to draw, but he has had no chance to study, and he's reached a point where he must learn more or lose all he has. I'm almost certain he can make something of himself. He ought to go to New York, where he can study and see pictures and find out things. Now, please advise me about it."

"How's his health—his stomach?"

"I believe we've never spoken of it. That's hardly the point."

"Well, I call it a big point. Suppose he went off to New York and got plumb ruined, the way I did—no eats, no sleeps. If you want my advice, he ought to stay right here where everybody's healthy. He shouldn't be foolish."

"Clarence!" Her eyes shone with impatience. "It isn't whether he's to go or not. He's *going*, and he's to have money to keep him there till he makes himself known. It's on that point I need advice."

"Oh, I beg your pardon! I didn't savvy at first. You're to tell me what to advise, and I'm to advise it? Well, tell me what to say."

"Don't be stupid, dear—just for a moment, please. You're bound to agree with me when you see his work. And you might offer to lend him the money—my money, though he's not to know that. Or perhaps you ought to buy his pictures. I'm sure you'll want some of those things he has. Of course that's the better way. It will let him feel independent. There, it's fixed. It was simple, after all." She flashed him a look of gratitude. "You're a help, after all, dear, when you choose to be."

"But—one moment, my babe! Perhaps after listening to my advice so

meekly, you'll let the poor chap say a word for himself. Perhaps he'd rather stay right here in God's own country, if he eats and sleeps well now."

"Please, please, let's not be so—so foody! Of course he wants to go!"

"But what in Heaven's name would you ever have done without my help, poor, mindless child that you are?"

But she was oblivious to this subtlety.

"Yes, dear, you're always a comfort. We'll ride over this afternoon and tell him he's to go. It will be a fine thing to do—he's so promising."

"Look here, Nell"—he glanced at her shrewdly—"is this to be his picnic or yours?"

She burned with a little inner rage to feel her cheeks redden, but the black fringe of her eyes did not fall before him.

"We'll ride over after luncheon," she repeated.

Late that evening the two inmates of the lake cabin sat before the big fireplace in the studio to talk of a wondrous thing. They had survived the most exciting half-day in the life of either, and the atmosphere of the room was still electrical with echoes of the big event. Through their supper, Ewing, unable to eat, had sat staring afar, helpless in the rush of the current, inert as a boulder in the bed of a mountain stream. He, so long at rest, was to be swept down from the peace of his hill nook to the ocean, to life itself. It was a thing to leave one aghast with a consternation that was somehow joyous. Since supper he had stared into the fire in dumb surrender to the flood, with intervals of dazed floor-pacing, in which he tried to foresee his course.

Ben Crider, submerged by the waters of the same cloudburst, was giving stouter battle to the current. His face drawn to more than its wonted dejection, he strove to play the beacon. Between snatches of worldly counsel he read with solemn inflection certain gems of guidance from authors in whose wisdom he had long felt a faith entire. His ready mind harked forward to direful emergencies, and he submitted de-

vices for meeting these, quoting pregnant passages from his well-thumbed "Guide to Polite Behavior," and his treasured "Traps and Pitfalls of a Great City."

"I can't believe it yet, Ben." Ewing rose to walk the floor again, his hands sunk deep in his pockets, his head bent low. "Think of his giving a hundred dollars for that drawing of 'Lon Pierce on the pinto, throwing a steer, and all that money for the others."

"Serves him right!" Ben hissed this vindictively, having first reluctantly laid aside "Traps and Pitfalls." "Serves him dead right! That feller puts on a wise look that's about sixty-five years beyond his real age, as I'd cal'late it. I tell you, son, it sure takes all kinds o' fools to make a world."

"But he said they were worth the money," Ewing pleaded. "He said I would do even better, some day."

"Sure—*sure* he said it! An' didn't he ask me if I had dyspepsia, an' did I sleep at night, an' I'd better remember to live an outdoor life of activity if I ever got that a-way. An' he thinks he's learned how to grain a deer-hide after watching me do it three minutes; an' he's goin' to pick up a live skunk next chanct he gits, because I told him jest how to grab it. Oh, he *said* things, all right! He said a variety o' things!" He glared at Ewing as he rounded out this catalogue of follies.

"I'm torn in two, Ben. I sha'n't be glad to leave here, and yet I'll be glad to go; I've dreamed it so long. It seems as if I'd dreamed it so hard I'd made it come true."

"Always pin your money to the inside of your vest, like I told you," came the voice of warning.

"I will, I will. But things *do* happen, don't they? This is like a fairy-tale."

"Fairy-tale!" The wise one uttered this with violent scorn. "Likely you was the sleepin' beauty, an' this here princess comes along with an alarm-clock!"

"Not a princess, Ben." He laughed boyishly. "She's a sure-enough queen."

"Jest remember they's knaves in the deck. That's all I ask."

"You like her, don't you?"
Ben made an effort to be fair.

"Well, I do an' then I don't. She's saddle stock fur looks, that lady is, but she ain't serious. No, sir! When her eyes is on me, I know as well's I want to she's snickerin' inside; makes no difference if her face does look like it was starched. You'll find, when all's said an' done, that she's plumb levitous, an' levitous folks is trisin'!"

"Have you seen how sorrowful she looks sometimes; a sort of glad-sorry, as if she felt sorry for herself and glad for other people? She makes me feel old when she looks that way—as if I must protect her."

"Yes, an' other times she's stiffer'n Lot's wife!"

"Other times she seems older than all the world; a woman who has always lived and always will."

"Well, son, when you git put afoot there, you write on, an' I'll manage to scare up a git-away stake fur you."

"It's wonderful to think of going out into the world that *they* knew, Ben—my father and mother. It seems as if they must be out there now, and that I'm going to meet them very quietly and naturally some day. I think it wouldn't astonish me."

"Look a-here, kid! That'll be about enough o' *that*! You go to bed."

The other smiled, a little wanly.

"I can't. I'm afraid to. I'm going to sit here a while and think, and when the moon gets up I'm going outside to think. The hills haven't heard the news yet, and the trail over to the lake doesn't know about it. I've got to spread it before I sleep. You see, when I do sleep, I'm afraid I'll wake up and find it was just stuff I dreamed."

"Shucks, kid, what's the use o' talking like that? It ain't no dream. It's true as God made little apples." There was, at the moment, a noticeable relaxation from the speaker's habitual austerity. An awkward smile of affection melted the hardness of his face as he held out a hand to Ewing. "An' I'm doggoned if I'd be so *all-fired* amazed if everything come out fur the best. Yes,

sir, blame me, kid, if I don't almost half-blieve you'll make good!"

"You can bet I'll try, Ben!"

"That's right; you do your damndest—'angels can do no more,' as the feller said."

As he lighted a candle his face was grim once more—savagely grim, even as he sang, in going to his rest:

Oh, 'twas on a summer's eve when I first
metter.

Swingin' on the garden ga-a-ate!

CHAPTER VII.

It now befell that the imminent adventure of Ewing should bring him a double rapture. The day after Mrs. Laithe secretly played special Providence to that unsuspecting youth her brother found profit of his own in the plan.

"I've a world of things to do here, Nell," he said. "I ought to stay here this winter. I'd be that much forwarder with my work next spring."

"I shall be quite safe alone," she answered.

"Why go alone? If you insist on robbing the cradle, why not take the innocent with you? Of course you'll have to see that he doesn't walk off the train, or lose his hat out of the window, or eat too much candy, or rough-house the other children on the way, but he'll serve every purpose of a man and brother."

"To be sure!" she broke in, with enthusiasm. "I worried last night about his going. We'll put it that I'm in his charge, and he will really be in mine."

"That's it. He'll feel important, and you'll be the tidy nurse. And with both of you off my mind, I can start those chaps to getting out logs for the Bar-B mansion. So that's settled."

Mrs. Laithe rode over to apprise Ewing of this plan. The little clearing slept vacant in the sunlight. She left Cooney "tied to the ground" by throwing the bridle-rein over his head, and knocked at the open door of the cabin with the handle of her quirt. There was no response save echoes from the empty liv-

ing-room. Crossing this, she drew aside the blanket that curtained the door of the studio. The big room lay before her in strange disorder. Pictures and hangings were gone from the wall. Two yawning trunks stood by the door; canvases and portfolios lay about; loose drawings and clothing littered the chairs and floor. Beyond this disarray stood the easel, still holding the mother's portrait. In the light from the window the eyes looked livingly into her own through the silence. She was struck by some new glint of meaning in them, something she read as an appeal, almost a prayer. Her own eyes fell, and then she first noticed the room's living occupant.

On the couch, in the shadow of the half-drawn curtain, Ewing lay asleep. He had sprawled there easily, half-turned on his side, one arm flung above his head, the other hanging over to the floor. Some new, quick-born interest—curiosity, sympathy, she knew not what—impelled her to scan the sleeping face more closely. She stepped lightly across to the couch and looked down at him, with a little air of carelessness against his sudden awakening. It was the first time she had studied his face in repose. Lacking the ready, boyish smile, it was an older face, revealing lines of maturity she had not suspected in the arch of brow above the deep-set eyes, in the lean jaws and sharply square chin, and in the muscled neck, revealed by the thrown-back head. It was a new face, for the unguarded faces of the sleeping, like the faces of the dead, tell many secrets.

Now, bending over the unmasked face, she divined with swift alarm that her old careless attitude toward the sleeper might never be recovered. What her new attitude must be she could not yet know, but she was conscious of being swept by a great wave of tenderness for him; swept, too, by fear of him; and the impact of these waves left her trembling before him.

Then her look rose to the mother's portrait, and she saw that the eyes had followed her; they seemed now to challenge, almost fiercely. Only the brief-

est of moments could she endure their gaze, a gaze that in some way drew life to itself from the breathing of the sleeper. Instinctively she brushed her hand before her own eyes, drew herself up with a little flinching shudder, and moved slowly backward to the door.

Then she was happily out in the sunlight, breathing deep of the pine-spiced air.

Not pausing to review those amazing moments of inner tumult, she stepped again to the door, and with her old, careless, mildly amused laugh she beat upon it, loudly this time. She heard an inarticulate call from the studio, and again she assaulted the panel. Then the curtain was drawn aside, and Ewing stared at her from the doorway.

"I believe you were sleeping," she started to say, but he came quickly to her with something between a laugh and a shout.

"Then it's true, it *is* true—you're real! I just dreamed that you became Ben Crider, and made me walk in the middle of the street." He fairly rushed her into the studio and waved excitedly to the open trunks.

"There! I began to pack last night so I could see it when I woke up and have a proof that things were true. I didn't sleep at all till about eight this morning."

She sat on the couch, feeling that she was foolish beyond measure to avoid the eyes of the portrait. Then she smiled at him with an effort to recover the amused ascendancy of their first meetings.

"It's all true, I assure you, and I wonder if you'd mind taking charge of me when you go East. My brother has suggested it, and I'll promise not to be a trouble."

His look of wondering delight was so utterly boyish, his helpless laughter so entirely without reserve that she regained, for the moment, her old easy dominance.

"Would I mind—mind going with you? That's a joke, isn't it?" He seized both her hands in a grasp from which she caught some thrill of his deep-breathed, electric joy.

"But of course this is nonsense," he went on. "I'm still lying there."

"Enough of dreams," she broke in warningly. "You'll find it only too, too real. You're going to work."

"You're not doubting anything?" he asked quickly.

"Not doubting, O youth! Only a little innocent wonder."

"But isn't life an enchantment? Isn't it all miracles? Oh, I understand poets at last. They can't tell you their secret unless you already know it. They sing in big numbers. They say a million is true, and you say: 'Yes, that's very pretty, but it's poetry—exaggeration; he really means that a hundred is true,' and you never know any better till the light comes. Then you see that the poet was literal and quite prosaic all the time. The whole million was always true, in beauty and bigness and wonder."

"Stop!" she protested. "You're making me feel as old as the world itself, ancient and scarred with wisdom."

"You!" he burst in. "You're as young as the world. You are foolish and I am the wise one if you can't see that. Indeed, you're looking beautifully foolish this minute."

She laughed a little uneasily.

"You are a babe for wisdom," she retorted; "but you're not to be enlightened in a day—nor by me. I'll give you a year. You shall tell me then which of us two is the older. Now you must be at your packing. Can you be ready by Monday?"

"Monday?—and I'd been wondering what would be the name of the day. So it's merely Monday? How many Mondays there have been, how many, many Mondays, that were like any other day! And now this Monday steals up—yes, I'll be ready."

"I see you are past reason——"

"Say above it——"

"Anyway, get on with your packing. So much is true."

He would have ridden back with her, but she demurred.

"It's so far," he urged.

"It isn't half far enough," she mocked

him, "I have so much thinking to do!"

"Monday, Monday, Monday, then!" he chanted, as he went out to lift her into the saddle. But when he had done this he suddenly bowed his head to kiss her hand, as he had seen his father long ago kiss his mother's hand.

"You are all the world, just now, all I know of it," he said.

She looked back to where he stood, straight and buoyant, his head thrown back in joyous challenge.

"And you are youth—dear, dear youth!" she cried; but this he could not hear.

A little farther on she breathed softly: "Poor dead Kitty—don't be afraid!"

CHAPTER VIII.

During those last days Ewing brushed only the airy slopes of illusion, strive as he would to keep his feet to earth. Many were the tricks he used to this end; vain tricks to forget the miracle of his going, of going so soon, of going with her.

When Ben called him on the morning of the start it was still dark. He lay a moment, his nerves tightening. This was the last time he would lie in that bed—for how long? Well, on some unmarked night in the pregnant future, lying there again, he would look back to this moment and tell himself all the wonderful things that had come to him—tell his ignorant, puzzled, excited self, who would, somehow, be waiting and wondering there.

He had breakfast on the table when Ben came in, and they ate by the light of a smoky lamp, tacitly pretending that no miracle was afoot. Saving the early hour, it was a scene they enacted whenever they drove to Pagosa for supplies, up to the point when, the meal finished, they carried two trunks from the studio out to the wagon. But they managed this carelessly enough, with only a casual, indignant word or two about the excessive weight of full trunks.

Only the faintest hint of light showed in the east as the chilled horses stumbled

awkwardly down the hill. A half-hour they rode in a silence broken but once, and then only by Ben's hoarse threat to "learn" the off-horse something needful but unspecified which it appeared not to know.

The light glowed from gray to rose, and day was opened by the bark of a frantic squirrel that ran half-way down a tree-trunk, threatening attack in alarm for its store of spruce cones at the foot of the tree.

Ewing exhaled with gusto a breath of the warming, pine-spiced air.

"It's sunning up, Ben." Ben grunted unamiably.

A little distance ahead of them a doe and a half-grown fawn bounded across the road.

"She seemed to be in a hurry," Ewing again ventured.

"She wanted t' git that child away from here, 'fore some one stuffed its head full o' fool talk about goin' off to New York. Can't tell what notions a young deer *might* git." With this laborious surmise, he shut his jaws together with repellent grimness.

Their road now wound down a hill and out of the woods, to join the valley road.

"Yender's Beulah Pierce!" Ben snapped this out savagely. The wagon was half a mile ahead. Pierce was driving, and in the rear seat were two figures whom they knew to be Mrs. Laithe and her brother. As Ben had pointedly ignored these, Ewing did not refer to them.

They lamely gossiped the miles away in strained avoidance of the big event. Only once did Ewing look back, while Ben was occupied with the horses at a ford. The rocky wall at the verge of their lake was intimately near, despite the miles they had come, and below it, through a notch in the hills, he could see a spot of yellow—the new shake roof on a shed they had built that summer near the cabin. Then his eyes were ahead to where Pierce's wagon crawled up a hill.

Ben whipped up the horses and burst into song:

One evening I was strolling through the city of the dead;
I viewed where all around me their peaceful forms were spread.

He took the thing at a quick, rollicking tempo, as one resolved to be gay under difficulties.

When they drew up to the station platform at Pagosa, Ewing hurried to greet Mrs. Laithe and her brother. Pierce busied himself with the trunks, cautiously watching the man check them.

Ben Crider, after a long, fervent look at Ewing's back, caught his breath, sniffled, strangled this, and stepped quickly into his wagon. Pulling the horses quietly away from the platform, he whipped them into a sharp trot toward the town. Ewing ran back, shouting. Ben would not turn, but he thrust one arm back and upward with a careless wave.

Ewing stared hard at the bent head, the eloquent back, longing for a further sign, but none came. He was at the gateway of the world, a mist before his eyes.

A moment later their little train rattled into a narrow cañon, where its shrill whistle, battered from wall to wall, made the place alive with shrieking demons.

Having seen his charge to a seat in the one squalid car, Ewing went out to brace himself on the rear platform. She who was doing this thing had seemed a strange lady again; in her manner, as in her dress, more formal. The dark-blue, close-fitting gown, the small toque of blue velvet, the secretive veil, the newish gloves, instead of the old, worn riding gauntlets, the glossy-toed black boots, so different from those of scarred tan he knew, all marked a change that heightened the pangs of homesickness he already suffered.

With burning eyes and tightened throat he saw the floor of the cañon rush away from him, and watched old Baldy's snow hood flashing momentarily as the train twisted, now sinking below a quick-rushing wall of rock, now showing over a clump of cedars. It was as if the old peak had become

sprightly at his going, and sought to bob curtseys to him.

He flung a tender glance at the diminished junction, now a low, dull blur on the level horizon, and went into the car.

For the moment the Pullman had no other occupant but himself and Mrs. Laithe, and she was sleeping, he thought; but her eyes opened as he would have passed her seat. She had replaced the toque with a brown cap he knew, and as she smiled up at him she seemed again almost the familiar godmother of his fairy-tale. He passed on, however, after a meaningless word or two, and, sprawling in another section, surrendered himself to the troubled pretentiousness of the Pullman school of decoration.

He had left the lady grateful for his going. She was in no mood for that artless' lyric chant of youth in which he was so adept. Her brother that morning had accused her of waning enthusiasm for her protégé.

"I believe you're funkings, Nell," he had said shrewdly. "You're discovering that mountain slumming is different from the city kind."

But she had protested that no discerning person of ordinary humanity could have done less for the prisoned youth. "Of course"—and she had sighed—"he's a mere bundle of untried eagerness, and we're responsible, in a way, for Heaven knows what; but we had to do it, didn't we?"

"Not 'we' had to! *You* had to. It's all yours, Nell—the credit and the glory and all the rest. I prefer to get up my own responsibilities, if you don't mind."

"But you agreed with me—you *did*—you advised when I asked you—it's perfectly plain—you said, 'Of course!'" But the train moved off in the midst of his laugh at this, and he had doffed his hat to her with a mocking gesture of free-handed relinquishment.

Now, as she closed her eyes again, her memory dove for some fairy-tale or fragment of mythology in which an unsuspecting humanitarian rescued an insignificant woods thing, only to have it change on the instant into a creature

troublesome in more ways than one. She was certain some primitive fabulist had foreseen this complication, but her mind was weary and shadowed, and the historic solution evaded her. "Mountain slumming" was truly more exigent than the town sort.

But this reflection aroused a defensive sympathy. The vision of Ewing as he had passed glowed before her shut eyes, the active, square-shouldered, slender figure, garbed in a decently fitting suit of gray (she was glad to remember that), the quick eyes, ardent for life, the thinned, brown face, the usual buoyance held down to an easy self-possession that was new to her, the wild, reliant expectancy of a boy tempered all at once by some heritage of insight. Outwardly, at least, he would fit his new life. So reflecting, she dozed on the look of the man in his eyes, and dreamed that she feared this and fled. But after mad flight through the windings of an interminable corridor she awoke, to look squarely into his eyes, to cower instinctively under his touch on her arm. Her waking thought took the thread of the dream, her flight had been vain; he was there, and his voice throbbed fatefully within a secret chamber of her mind, even though his words rang little of portent.

"We are coming to the supper station."

She hastened to freshen herself with cold water, and they were presently eating a hasty meal at a crowded table. Then they were out side by side to pace the platform briskly.

There was green about the station, where water had taught the desert to relent, but beyond this oasis the sand sea stretched far and flat to murky foot-hills. Above these they could see a range of mountains that still caught the sunlight, some crystal white with snow, others muffled by clouds turned to irishued scarfs of filmiest gauze.

"El Dorado is beyond those hills," said the youth fervently.

"It looks accessible from here," she answered, "but—"

"You're warning me again. You're afraid I'll be discouraged by the hills."

"Not discouraged, but there are resting-places on the way. They hold the bulk of the pilgrims, I fear."

"I shall go on; not even you could stop me."

She caught a glint in his fierce young eyes that she thought he must be unconscious of.

"I? Oh, I shall spur you—if you need spurring."

"I know; I'm only beginning to realize how much I owe you; I mean to repay you, though."

There was an intimation of remoteness in his tone, as if he saw himself removed from her, mounting solitary to his dream city, a free-necked, well-weaponed pilgrim, sufficient unto himself. It was as if he had put distance between them the moment he crossed the threshold of the world. She drew a full breath. It came to her, as the upflashing of some submerged memory, that all his frank adoration of her had been quite impersonal. He had regarded her as a bit of line and color. It was amazing to remember that he had made no effort to know her, save with his eyes. She divined that she had stopped short of being human to him, while he to her had been, more than anything else, a human creature of freshness and surprises. Whatever difficulties might lie in the way of an easy friendliness between them, they would not be of his own making. She was sure she felt a great relief.

The following day they sped through a land whose kind Ewing knew, but after another night he awoke to find their train breasting the brown waves of a sea that rolled lazily to far horizons. No longer was there one of his beloved mountain peaks to be a landmark; only an endless, curving lowness, as of land that had once tried to lash itself into the fury of mountain and crag, and then ceased all effort—to lie forever impotent and sad.

The lady beguiled him over the inadequacies of Kansas by promising a better land farther on. He gladly turned from the car-window to watch the pretty play of her mouth as she talked.

But the next day—they steamed out

of St. Louis in the morning—he scanned several hundred square miles of excellent farming-land with sheer dismay. From morning till night they ran through what, to Ewing, was a dead, depressing flatness, a vast and clumsy jest of a checker-board, with cornfields for squares. But this endless level lacked even solitude. To Ewing, indeed, the mystery of it lay in its well-peopled towns. He wondered how men kept sane there. Mrs. Laithe insisted that it was an important stretch of our country, that it fed thousands and made useful objects in its tall-chimneyed factories (things like wagons and watches and boots, she believed), and that it ought not to be discountenanced. But he could feel nothing for it, save an unconfessed pity that it would sleep that night in ignorance of his glorious transit. He had never suspected there could be so many thousands of people who took the world as a tame affair and slept indifferent to young men with great things before them.

"If New York is like this," he said, with a flash of his old boyish excitement, "what can I ever do without you?"

"But it isn't at all like this, and you'll do big things without me—or with me, if I can help you."

"You will have to help me. Now that I've seen the beginning of the world, I'm depending on you more than I thought I should when we started."

"You will lose that."

"Will I? But it will be queer to see you as part of the world—no longer the whole of it; to see how you stand out from the others. Perhaps the rest of the world will be only a dingy background for you—you are all color and life."

"You've made me feel like a lay-figure," she laughed. Then, in a flash of womanish curiosity, she ventured: "Have you ever thought me anything but a shell of color?"

He stammered, blushing painfully.

"Oh, a real person—of course, certainly! A woman, yes—but when I think of you as a woman, I'm scared, like those first times I saw you. I can't help it. You may not believe it," he

concluded, with a burst of candor, "but the truth is, I don't know women."

He was again embarrassed when she retorted, with her laugh:

"O youth! May you always know so much!"

"Well, to-morrow afternoon we shall be in New York," he said briskly, when she had shut the deeps of her eyes from him. He had felt the need to show that there were matters upon which he could speak with understanding.

CHAPTER IX.

By five o'clock the next afternoon Ewing had ended his journey in an upper room of the Stuyvesant Hotel. This hostelry flaunts an outworn magnificence. Its hangings are dingy, its plenteous gilt is tarnished; and it seems to live on memories of a past when fashion splendidly thronged its corridors. But peace lies beyond the gloom of its portals, and the Ewing was glad to be housed from the dazing tumult outside.

He fell back on the sofa, a once lordly thing of yellow satin, now frayed and faded, to eye the upper reaches of the room. The high blue-tinted ceiling was scarred and cracked. Depending from its center a huge chandelier dangled glittering prisms of glass. An immense mirror in a gilt frame, lavishly roccoco, rested on the mantel of carved white marble. Heavy lace curtains, shrouding the two broad windows, made a restful half-light.

He had awakened to hills that morning, wooded hills and well towned. Then had come veritable cities, rich to him with all romance under their angular, smoky ugliness. And at last had come the real city—the end of the world and its center. He discovered it beyond a stretch of white-flecked water alive with strange craft. A vista of heart-shaking surprises unfolded ahead of the great boat they boarded, a boat with a heart strongly beating in tune with his own. Too soon it nosed its way, with a sort of clumsy finesse, into a pile-walled pocket. There followed the keen, quick

rattling of a cogged wheel and a rush of people who seemed insufficiently impressed by the magnitude of the event. Then they entered a cab, to be driven from a throng of other cabs and jostling pedestrians through the maze of a dream come true. He tried not to ignore his companion for glimpses of that strange life through the cab-window.

Very casually she had said at parting: "Thank you so much for all your care of me—and dine with us at seven-thirty, won't you? I shall try to have a friend here that I think may help you."

A long time he lay, reviewing that chaotic first hour in the world. Everything throbbed here, it seemed. One lived more quickly. And how long could the body endure it?

He set about opening his trunks and took out a suit of evening clothes that had been his father's. He had found that the suit fitted him, and he and Ben had assured themselves, by reference to the pictured heroes in magazine advertisements, that its cut was nearly enough in the prevailing mode. Ewing had also found some cards of his father's which would convey his own name to all who might care to read it.

As he sauntered out at the dinner hour he wished that Ben could be watching him. The Bartell house was in Ninth Street, less than a long block from his hotel, a broad, plain-fronted, three-story house of red brick trimmed with white marble. Caught in a little eddy from the stream heading in Washington Square and sweeping north, it had kept an old-time air of dignity and comfort. Ewing observed a cheering glow through the muslin curtains at the windows as he ascended the three marble steps. The old white door, crowned with a fanlight and retaining its brass knocker, had suffered the indignity of an electric bell, but this was obscurely placed at the side, and he lifted the knocker's lion head. As no bell rang, he dropped it, and was dismayed by its metallic clamor. He swiftly meditated flight, thinking to return for a seemlier demonstration. But the door swung back, and a person in evening dress stood aside to bow him in.

"Ah, good evening!" exclaimed Ewing cordially. Then, embarrassed, he felt for a card, recalling that he was in a land where, probably, one could not be cordial to persons who opened doors.

"For Mrs. Laithe," he said, in grave tones, eying the man's bluntly cut features with a severity meant to dispel any wrong impression. The person received the card on a tiny silver plate, relieved him of hat and coat with what seemed to Ewing an uncanny deftness, bowed him to the gloom of a large apartment on the left, and vanished. An instant later he reappeared, drew portières aside, revealing another warmly lighted room, and Ewing beheld a white vision of his hostess.

"I'm glad to have a word with you," she began. "Sit here. You're to meet a friend, Ned Piersoll, who will tell you a lot of things. I telephoned him directly I came in, and he found he could come, though he must run when he's eaten—some affair with his mother. But he'll have found out about you."

"I'm much obliged to you," he stammered, having caught little of her speech.

"Ned will tell you what to do. He knows everybody. He's on the staff of the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, and he had a novel out last spring, 'The Promotion of Fools,' that you must have seen advertised everywhere, like a medicine."

"Yes, I've read that book."

"You must tell him if you liked it—they all care to hear that—and he'll see that you meet men of your own kind." For looking at her he had been able to give her words little attention. She had revealed herself anew in the dull white of a gown that brought out the elusive glow of her face. Her eyes were deep wells, shaded but luminous, under the lusterless dark of her hair, and her smile flashed a girlish benignity upon him. Acutely alive was he to the line of neck and shoulder and arm, a slender, supple neck, set on shoulders superbly but lightly modeled, the small collar-bone exquisitely muffled but not lost, and the little hollow at the base of

her throat prettily definite. And all was white and lusterless save the warming dusk of her eyes and the flash from her parting lips.

Feeling a slight discomfort under his look, she at length diverted his eyes to the room in which they sat.

"It's the room I like best in all the house," she said. "That big drawing-room you came through is inhuman. It terrified me as a child, and still refuses to make friends with me, but this library—don't you feel that I've humanized it?"

He became aware that he had felt its easing charm of dark-toned wood and dull-red walls. There were low bookshelves, low seats that invited, a broad table with its array of magazines, and a lazy fire in the open grate.

"It's the room you need," he replied. "You draw all the light to yourself. It gives you color, turns your hair to black, and makes your eyes look like—"

"Mr. Piersoll!" announced the man.

His look still engaged her as she floated forward to greet the tall, pleasant-faced, alert young man with tumbled yellow hair who now entered. Not until he heard his own name did he relinquish her to acknowledge the word of introduction.

A moment later the father of Mrs. Laithe strolled in and Ewing was again introduced, this time to a stoutish man with a placid pink face, scanty hair going from yellow to white—arranged over his brow with scrupulous economy—and a closely cut mustache of the same ambiguous hue. He was a man who gracefully confessed fifty years to all but the better informed. Ewing felt himself under the scrutiny of a pair of very light gray eyes as Bartell took his hand, tentatively at first, then with a grip of entire cordiality. One may suspect that this gentleman had looked forward with mild apprehension to a dinner meeting with the latest protégé of his impulsive daughter. The youth's demeanor, however, so quickly caused his barbaric past to be forgotten that, by the time they were at table, his host had said to him, prefacing one of his best anecdotes: "Of course you know

that corner table on the Café De la Paix terrace—”

Ewing floated dreamily on the stream of talk; laughing, chatty talk, spiced with suggestive, strange names; blithe gossip of random happenings. He was content to feel its flow beneath him and rather resented the efforts to involve him in it, preferring to listen and to look. But he was courteously groped for by the others and compelled to response as the dinner progressed.

Piersoll mentioned his drawing pleasantly and engaged him for dinner at a club the following evening. “I’ll call for you at the Stuyvesant about six,” he said, when Ewing had accepted. “I must have a look at your stuff. Don’t dress; we dine in our working-clothes at the Monastery.”

The father of Mrs. Laithe warned Ewing to beware of worry in his new surroundings.

“Let life carry you, my boy. That’s my philosophy in a nutshell. Don’t try to lug the world about. The people who tell you that life in New York is a strain haven’t learned rational living. Worry kills, but I never worry. Eleanor sees too much of the black side, poverty, starvation, hard luck—all kinds of deviltry, and it reacts on her. I look only on the cheerful side, and that reacts on me. My dear Eleanor, if I had fretted over tenement-houses the way you have, I should be a broken man. Thank the gods that be, I’ve had the wit to let my agent do all that!”

His daughter received this with a shrug of despair. “But confess, daddy—you *have* a worry.”

“Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt!” quoted Piersoll, divining her mark.

“I admit, my dear, that legitimate worry has its uses. I only warn against the too common abuse of it. I maintain,” he went on, turning to Ewing, that a man with the feelings of a boy should, if there’s any moral balance in the world, retain the waistline of a boy; yet I’ve not done it. I go to doctors—they all talk the same ballyrot about exercise or they harangue you about diet. Why, I’ve heard them gibber of

things one mustn’t eat till I writhed in anguish. Some day I know I shall chuck it all and let nature take her course.” He glared defiantly about the table.

“She’s not waiting for you to let her, dear,” observed his daughter maliciously.

“It’s my temperament, I suppose”—he sighed ruefully into his plate of sweet stuff—“just as it’s Randy Teevan’s temperament to stay slender, though I suspect Randy of stays.”

Mrs. Laithe had glanced swiftly toward Ewing at the mention of this name. She again looked at him alertly a moment later when the man announced “Mr. Teevan and Mr. Alden Teevan.”

“Alden told me this afternoon at the club, my dear, that he and his father might stop for a moment on their way up-town, just to say ‘How-de-do.’ We can have coffee in the library.”

His daughter received this with a meditative under lip. Then she brightened.

“I’m sure you men would rather sit here and smoke while I run in and see them. They’ll stay only a minute.”

“Nonsense, child! I can’t lose sight of you so soon again. We can smoke in there as well.”

“Coffee in the library, Harris.” She gave the order with a submissive shrug and led the way out.

Ewing saw two men come to greet her, alike enough of feature to reveal their relationship at first glance. He detected, however, a curious contrast they presented. The father, slight and short of stature, was a very young-looking old man, while the son was an old-looking young man. The father was dapper, effusive, sprightly, quick with smiling gestures; the son restrained, deliberate, low-toned, with a slow, half-cynical smile of waiting. He gave the effect of subduing what his father almost elishly expressed.

Father and son greeted the men over the shoulders of Mrs. Laithe, and Ewing was presented. There was an inclination of the son’s head, and a careless glance of his waiting eyes; from

the father, a jerky, absent "How d'you do—how d'you do!"

They moved by chatting stages to the library. The elder Teevan, carefully pointing the ends of his small dark mustache, stood with his back to the dying fire, a coffee-cup in one hand, a cigarette in the other, twittering gallantly of a town's desolation wrought by the going away of Mrs. Laithe; and of a town renewed by her great-hearted return. "A preciously timed relenting," he called it, with a challenging sigh toward the lady, as he gracefully flicked back a ringlet of the lustrous brown hair that had fallen low on his brow. Ewing thought it wonderful hair on a man whose face, though ruddy in hue, showed signs of age. There were deep lines at the corners of those gallantly flashing eyes, and their under lids drooped. The skin was shrunk tightly over the high, thin nose, the cheeks were less than plump, and the neck revealed some unhappy wrinkles. Sadly, too, his voice failed at supreme moments. It was tragic, Ewing thought, to listen to a sentence valiantly begun, only to hear the voice crack on a crucial word.

Mrs. Laithe received the little man's tribute with a practised indifference, chatting absently, meanwhile, with the son. Presently she led Ewing and the younger Teevan to the drawing-room to admire a huge jar of roses for which she thanked Teevan.

Back in the library Piersoll was listening to a salmon-fishing story of Bartell's. The elder Teevan genially overlooked the scene, humming lightly to himself the catch air from a late musical comedy. He turned to study a bit of Japanese bronze on the mantel behind him, screwing a single glass into an eye. When he had scanned the bronze with a fine little air of appreciation he replaced it, resumed his jaunty humming, and idly picked up a card that had been thrown beside it. Carelessly under the still fixed monocle he brought the words "Mr. Gilbert Denham Ewing." A moment he held it so in fingers that suddenly trembled. His head went sharply back, the glass dropped from his eye,

dangling on its silken ribbon, and his little song died. He glanced about him, observing the two groups to be still inattentive. Placing a supporting hand on the mantel he set the glass firmly again and studied the card a second time. Another glance through the rooms, and he resumed his song, crumpling the card in his hand. Then, turning, he stood once more before the fire, his hands comfortably at his back. One of them tossed the card into the grate, and his song again ceased.

Bartell looked up, having, after incredible finesse, slain and weighed his giant salmon. Piersoll, recalling that the anecdotist had killed other salmon in his time, made a hasty adieu and went to his hostess, who lingered in the drawing-room with the younger men. Teevan, before the fire, breathed in smoke, emitted it from pursed lips, studied the ash at the end of his cigarette from under raised, speculative brows, and flashed search-light eyes upon his host.

"Who's the young chap, Chris?"

Bartell took up a liqueur glass and turned to his questioner.

"Name's Ewing, I believe. Some chap Eleanor picked up in the far West. Painter, I believe, or means to be."

"Painter, yes, to be sure—quite right: painter—" He waited pointedly.

"Paints cowboys and Indians, I fancy—the usual thing. Seems a decent sort; rather a gentleman. You're looking a bit off, Randy."

"Am I, though? Queer! Never felt fitter. Walked to Fifty-ninth Street and back to-day. Might have overdone a bit. That chap staying in town long?"

"Have to ask Eleanor. It's her affair. By Joye! old boy, you are a wonder. I wish I could keep it off around here the way you do."

The little man drew himself up, expanded his chest, and bravely flourished a smile of acknowledgment. This faded into a look of hostile curiosity, discreetly veiled, as Mrs. Laithe and the two young men came in from the drawing-room.

"Time to be moving on, governor," young Teevan remarked.

"I'm not going, my boy," the little

man answered in crisp tones, with the hint of a side look at Ewing and Mrs. Laithe. "Run on, like a good chap, and make my excuses to the dear grandmother. Needn't lie, you know. Say I chicked her theater-party at the last moment because the places are stuffy. Say I'm whimsical, capricious, fickle as April zephyrs—in all but my love for her. Run, like a good lad, while I quench a craving for tales of adventure from the most charming of her sex and from our young friend, here—will you pardon my oversight—Ewing?—ah, to be sure, from Mr. Ewing—Ewing. I must remember that. I'm a silly ass about names."

But when his son had gone the little man appeared to forget the craving that had prompted his stay. From his stand on the hearth-rug he jauntily usurped the talk, winging his way down the world stream of gossip from capital to capital. Circuitous, indeed, was his approach to art; an anecdote of studio life in Paris; a criticism of Rodin, "Whitman in marble"; the vigor of our native art impulse, only now learning to withdraw a slavish deference from the French schools. "And you—Mr.—Ah, yes—Ewing, to be sure—our amiable and rotund host tells me that you are to be a warrior in this fray of brush and chisel. Bravo! You shall show me your work."

Ewing had listened to his recondite discourse chiefly with a morbid expectancy of that recurrent break in the voice, straining until it came and relaxing until it quavered back to the hazardous masculine level. Finding himself thus noticed, he stammered: "Oh, I—I've done some work in black and white. I hope—Mrs. Laithe has encouraged me."

"A charming modesty, yours; by no means the besetting sin of your craft, but is Mrs. Laithe an ideal promoter of genius? I fancy you'll need a sterner guide, one to be harsh as well as kind. Women can't be that, least of all the charming specimen who has honored you with her patronage. I shall be proud to supplement her deficiencies as critic—her glorious, her fascinating de-

ficiencies. Women, audacious souls, are recklessly kind. They incur perils to chill the blood of brave enough men, meaning monstrously well all the time"—his narrowed eyes sought to read the face of Mrs. Laithe—"but I've yet to see one worth a second look who had divined that there exists a certain arbitrary relation between cause and effect. Need I word the inference? No?"

Relieved by his scrutiny of her face, he broke off, his heart leaping to the thought: "She doesn't know—doesn't know—the fool!"

"I'll be glad to show you what I have," Ewing answered, rejoicing at this solicitude in a critic so obviously eminent. "I've been afraid all along that Mrs. Laithe might be too kind."

"Kinder than she knew—kindness is no word for her excess. Women lack fiber where their sympathies are involved. They'll not inflict pain within the scope of their imaginations—beyond that rather narrow field, of course, they're merciless, bless them! But trust me to score your work if it deserves that, and trust me to praise if it merits praise. You shall exhibit to me. By the way"—he consulted a small enamelled watch—"I've a bit of time to spare. If you're stepping along I'll not mind looking at your things this evening."

Ewing arose, glowing with pleasure. He felt drawn to this wonderful little man who knew everything, and who was visibly kind—just, at any rate—under that fantastic cloak of severity.

"You're very good," he said. "I'm staying close by, at the Stuyvesant."

"Drop in often, Ewing," urged Bartell, as they shook hands. "And don't let Teevan put you down. I dare say you'll come on, you know, if you chuck worry."

As he parted from Mrs. Laithe he was aware of a new look in her eyes. He had learned to read them. They sought now to tell him—what? There was a warning in them, and her glance seemed to enfold him almost protectingly. But her words were not more than mere words of formal parting, with a suggestion that he drop in for tea some afternoon soon.

CHAPTER X.

They walked briskly to the Stuyvesant in silence, for Ewing could think of nothing to say, and his companion seemed preoccupied. He showed, indeed, the stress of some excitement, for Ewing once heard him mutter heatedly. Suspecting this to be meant for himself, he evoked by inquiry only an impatient "Not here—not here!" He believed that his distinguished companion must be engrossed for the moment with something profounder than the drawings of a novice.

At the hotel they ascended to Ewing's room. Indicating a chair to Teevan, he went to the mantel for matches. When he had set the room to sudden light he stepped quickly back, for the little man, standing there, glared at him in a panic of fear and disgust.

In the shock of his embarrassment, Ewing fumbled at his overcoat and slowly drew it off. Teevan's eyes now blazed rage upon him. His small, withered, blue-veined hands were tightly clenched at his sides. His attitude was almost a crouch. Ewing felt a furtive amusement above his dismay, at sight of the dapper little figure in this incongruous battle pose.

A moment they stood so, then the upper lip of Teevan lifted slowly to a snarl. Seeing that he was about to speak, there ran with Ewing's amazement an absurd apprehension of that break in the voice.

"What do you mean by it?" The swiftness, the intensity of the utterance held the voice level thus far, but the break came with the next words, and the speech ended in a wail.

"What do you think to gain by coming here—by hounding me—by hounding *me*?"

Ewing constrained himself to quiet, with an impulse to soothe this inexplicable fury.

"Please sit down, won't you? You were going to criticize my drawings, you know. You suggested it a moment ago, and I thought—" He took up a portfolio of sketches from one of the open trunks.

"Your trash! What's that to me? Do you think to pass this off? You've learned effrontery in a fine school. Come to the point. What can you make by this indecency—this—"

Ewing's look checked him—something genuine in his bewilderment.

"Come," began Teevan again, "is it possible you're no one, after all, instead of being less than no one? You know me, don't you?"

"Of course I know you; Mrs. Laith introduced us."

"Oh, don't juggle. You can't swagger it off with me. You shall not hound me or mine."

"Hound?" Ewing sought for light, still trying to subdue this absurd assailant.

"Hound, I said, you snug brat! You know me—you've not forgotten my name so soon."

"Teevan, I believe. Really, Mr. Teevan—I—"

"Randall Gordon Teevan! The name meant something to you, didn't it?"

"No; it didn't mean anything to me."

"Ah! say that again!" He came toward the younger man to peer up into his face with a grinning, incredulous scowl. "Say it again!"

Ewing drew back from his scrutiny with a slight impatience.

"Why say it again? Isn't once enough? You hear well, don't you? What should your name mean to me?"

"You still try to carry *that* off? Your game isn't ready to play?"

Ewing resumed his patient search.

"See here, Mr. Teevan, let's be very quiet and get at this. I never heard your name until an hour ago. Perhaps it ought to mean something to me, but it doesn't. I'm not well acquainted in New York; I only came here to-day. Now"—his voice became cajoling—"suppose you sit down there quietly and tell me all about yourself."

"Your name is Ewing, isn't it?"

"Of course!"

"What's your full name?"

"Gilbert Denham Ewing."

"Damn him!"

"Damn him? You are speaking of me?"

"Not you—you cub!"

"Another Ewing?"

"Another Gilbert Denham Ewing."

"I never knew any other but my father. And you wouldn't be damning him."

He said this with a confident smile, and the peering little man at last read him accurately. An impalpable veil seemed to screen his scowling face. Erect from his peering stoop, he passed a small hand dazedly across his brow, and his face had become pleasantly ingenuous, alive with a half-comprehending regret. With a rueful laugh he put out a hand to Ewing, who took it, to say the least, doubtfully.

"A thousand pardons, my boy! I fear I've suffered an attack of nervous aberration to which I am unhappily subject. It's most distressing. I'm chagrined beyond measure by the annoyance I must have caused you. I give no end of worry to my specialist by these seizures. My speech wandered provokingly, I dare say. It always does. You'd not credit some of the things I've said to my dearest friends at such times. But you can fancy the mortification it is to me. You'll pardon me, I trust—youth's charity for the failings of age. The horrid truth is that I'm a bit oldish—not aged, not outworn, mind you—my years have come and gone lightly—but at times like these I'm obliged to admit the count. Come, you'll forget?"

Ewing delightedly pressed his hand. He could believe the little man's tale of his years. The hair that he had remarked for its young look had been uncannily twisted on the head of its wearer during the flurry of his transport. An area of luminous scalp now showed above one ear.

He stammered awkward but heartfelt words of assurance.

"Doubtless it quite bowled you over," Teevan pursued—"though I never can recall what I've said; but let us forget, and, if you'd not mind, let us say nothing of it to any one—to Mrs. Laithé, for example. If it came to the ears of my son—he's overanxious about me already."

"Certainly, I'll not speak of it, and

I'm sorry, very sorry. Lay your gloves on the mantel, there, and find a seat." He turned to his trunk, hoping the little man would sight his head in the mirror. When he again looked up the hair was in perfect adjustment, and Teevan beamed on him from an armchair.

"Your father," he began, "I seem to recall your saying it—was a painter. Doubtless he taught you much."

"I studied with him there in the mountains till he died. I've nothing left of his but this portrait of my mother."

He took the unframed canvas from the tray of the trunk and held it before his guest.

"Do you get the right light there?"

It had been a bad quarter of an hour for Ewing, and, as he adjusted the picture, he felt a moment's satisfaction in having weathered it so plausibly. And now that the curious little gentleman seemed restored, it was pleasant to anticipate his cultured appreciation of that work of art which was the boy's chief treasure.

"There's isn't any shine across it now, is there?" he asked, and looked up with a shy, proud, waiting smile.

But the agitation that had gone before was as nothing to what now passed in front of his dismayed eyes. One moment his guest hung staring at the canvas with a goblin horror; then, uttering a kind of sob, he shot inconsequently out of the door.

The harried Ewing dropped the picture and rushed in pursuit. He came up with the little man at the head of the stairs. He was trembling, and his face was ashen gray; but after a few deep breaths he smiled and waved a hand jauntily to indicate humorous despair. It seemed to say: "I am frequently like this—it's annoying past words." He spoke of needing a restorative, and suggested an advisable haste in the direction of the café.

"They've some choice old cognac down-stairs. Suppose we chat over a bit of it. I'm rather done up. These absurd attacks of mine react on the heart. A noggin of brandy will fetch me about. You'll come?"

They were presently at a table in the hotel café.

"We've the room to ourselves," said Teevan genially. "Delightful old place, this; restful, reminiscent, mellow—and generally empty. I detest the cheap glitter of those up-town places with their rowdy throngs. They make me feel like a fish in a fiddle-box, as our French cousins say. You'll have a soda with yours?"

Teevan drank his own brandy neat, and at once refilled his glass.

"Now for a chat about yourself, my young friend—for surely only a friend could have borne with me as tenderly as you have this evening. You're a fellow of promise—the future clamors for you—your drawings enchant me."

Ewing reflected that his drawings had not been exposed, but the intention was kind, and he was grateful for that. Teevan drank more brandy with a dainty relish, and begged to hear of his young friend's adventures in the far hills.

Ewing expanded in the warmth of this kindly concern. He told, little by little, under adroit prompting, what he had to tell. Teevan displayed a gratifying interest, especially in what he recounted of his mother's death.

It was one o'clock when they parted, and then only at a hint that the place would close its old-fashioned doors for the night. Ewing rejoiced to feel that he had made a desirable friend. He liked the little man well. Teevan had said at the last: "You should move on to Paris, my boy. You'll need the touch they give only in that blessed rendezvous of the masters." Ewing went to his room realizing that the world of his dreams did actually abound in adventure. His first day had been memorable.

Teevan walked through Ninth Street to his own home, a few doors beyond the Bartell house. It was a place of much the same old-fashioned lines, that had withstood the north-setting current.

He let himself in, and went to the din-

ning-room at the rear. Here he lighted a gas-jet, took a decanter from the side-board, and brought a glass and a bottle of soda from the butler's pantry. He sipped the drink and lighted a cigarette. His musings, as first reflected in his face, were agreeable. His mouth twitched pleasantly, his eyes glistened. At intervals he chuckled and muttered. With an increase of brandy in the glass he became more serious.

When Alden Teevan entered an hour later he found his father in a mood astonishingly savage. At sight of his son the little man became vocal with meaningless abuse. It was as if the presence of a listener incited him to continue aloud some tirade that he had pursued in silence. But the younger Teevan, lounging in the doorway, only stared with polite concern as he was greeted with these emotional phrases:

"A damned milk-and-water Narcissus—a pretentious cub with the airs of a cheap manikin of the world—a squeaking parasite—a toadlike damned obscenity——"

An easy smile came to the son's face as he noted the fallen tide in the decanter.

"Night-night, my quaint, amiable father—cheery dreams!"

They studied each other a moment. The elder man seemed to meditate some disclosure, but stopped on the verge of it.

"That's all, my boy!"

The young man laughed again.

"It's enough, I fancy—but don't overdo it, Randy. You know one mustn't at your age."

"I'm taking care, taking care of everything, my boy—never you fear, I——"

The other passed on, but stopped at the stairway and called back:

"I say, Randy!"

"Yes—yes——"

"Get to bed, you absurd little rat, you!"

PACKER JIM'S GUARDIANSHIP



By Roy Norton

WHEN a man associates with burros for eight or ten years he gets the burro habit, and, like drinking or smoking, so they say, it's hard to break off. It was pretty well fixed on Jim Tipton when first he came to the Sierra Madres along with Baldy and three or four other pack-mules; but Baldy was his intimate friend, and the others didn't count.

It was when Holcomb Valley, away up in the tops of the hills, was a real camp, where every one was busy getting gold, or sure he was going to get it, and it was nobody's business who anybody else was or where he came from. Curiosity starts lots of cemeteries, so it didn't pay to want to know too much. All that any one ever really cared about was whether the other fellow was on the square, and Jim Tipton was all of that. So was Baldy. When Jim gave his word it was a certainty, whether he was only to bring in a sack of flour or take a mule-load of gold out, it would be done on time. And there isn't much of anything finer than always keeping your word and making good.

Jim had been a civilian teamster and packer with the army when things were lively along the desert, at a time in which a man didn't make any heavy bets, when he rolled in his blankets, that he would get up in the morning with his scalp. When the noble red man, as a reward for having tortured and murdered all he could, was finally pensioned into fat and lazy peace, Jim naturally drifted into packing, and the drifting and the packing brought him to Holcomb.

That's all any one knew of him, and

more than anybody cared. But before long every one was glad he was there because packing wasn't a thing that most men tackled, particularly when the trail ran away off into the high-back hills, through passes, along shelves by waterfalls, and over places where the ledge tried to lose itself in the face of the cliffs. It was no pygmy's job.

Even for a packer, Jim wasn't handsome, being that kind of a man that the desert makes, or makes the desert—tall, lean, and leathery, sunburned to a red, and with little wrinkles around his eyes from much peering over hot sands. He was more liberal with everything than talk, of which he was miserly, perhaps through lack of practise. But the Lord Almighty's too busy to measure men by words. It's what they do. Be sure of that! So most men believe Jim stood pretty well with Him, and others don't matter.

Baldy was a wise old chap, who had lived with Jim a long time. In fact, they must have become acquainted somewhere out on the desert before they came to the new camp. Baldy was rather a benevolent-looking burro, having a white face and whiskers and a pair of philanthropic ears much bigger around than any of his trim little legs which a hand could girdle. He seemed to think he had a right to go into any cabin where Jim was welcomed, and, come to think of it, most everybody else thought so. He was just like a good-natured dog that's always hanging around a table or a camp-fire and looking so longingly for a little attention or a scrap of something to eat that no one can refuse out of mere politeness. Baldy was real polite, too, because he never took anything without asking for it in his way. Jim said Baldy got his honesty from a preacher who raised

him, but the boys thought it was really from associating with Jim himself.

Life with them was just about the same one day as another. Break camp in the morning, swing the pack-trees on, get the loads up and throw the hitches and plod away over the trail, Baldy's bell calling "Tink-tank; tink-tank" as he led the way. Soft spots in the trail would stop the ringing until Jim came front and fixed it up. It was the same way with a bridge. Baldy would go up on it and tap it with his feet before putting his weight down until he got clear across, while the whole train would watch him go over, feeling sure of his judgment. And so every day they did the same, life beginning and ending with the trail. Always the trail.

Along about the time when the camp had settled into an every-day basis and was used to Jim and Baldy, Bill Pape came into the valley with his little girl. He wasn't strong enough to work in the hills, so made one of the first land entries in that country. It was almost the last thing any one else would have thought of, but the place was pretty enough, being a little valley through which a stream rambled along until it came to an edge where it fell off into a cañon and made its bed out to the sage-brush flats, many miles below. Bill built him a cabin from the big logs around the valley's edge, and went into a sort of farming business, selling vegetables to the miners over at Holcomb for camp prices. He never got very well acquainted because he didn't seem to fit into the West, but he wasn't a bad fellow. He was a dreamy kind of man, with book-learning. Used to read poetry and such.

Bill's place was the homiest anywhere around, and some way it appealed to Jim, who got into the habit of dropping over to the cabin with Baldy, whenever he got time, and watching Bill and his little Annie puttering around the flower-beds and truck patches. It seemed almost as if Jim and Baldy had been wanting a little girl to love for a mighty long time by the way they took up with Annie. Both of them used to pack her around on

their backs, and several times Jim took her on the round trip to San Bernardino. And those were great trips!

Then came the time when she made all the trips with Jim and Baldy. It was when Bill died, leaving no relatives to whom he could send Annie. Jim brought the news.

There was a big time on at the dance-hall that night. More people there than usual. The lamps were swinging, and the fiddles going and the bar glasses clinking, when something came into the door that made everybody stop and take notice.

It was Jim Tipton, and in his arms he held a little girl who was crying and staring wide-eyed through her tears at the strangeness of a place she had never seen before.

Jim, standing there in the doorway with the black night behind him, put out one hand with a gesture that was part appeal and part command, and everybody listened. He waited until it was so still that you could almost hear the lights flicker.

"Boys," he said, in his slow voice, "Old Bill Pape's dead. Died about an hour ago, over in his cabin. I want somebody to help me take care of the girl to-night, and of him."

Now, death wasn't anything unusual in that sixty-foot log dance-hall. Men had died in it, and suddenly; but there was something about Bill Pape's dying, and something about that forlorn, sobbing baby girl that made every one feel a little queer. Most all the men volunteered to help, and all the women wanted to care for Annie. Probably they weren't the kind most men would want to take care of their children, but, after all, they might do worse. There's mighty few women bad enough so there isn't something fine in them when it comes to a helpless little girl.

They put Bill Pape away next day, the best they knew how. There was no preacher in the camp, so it was hard work to have a real ceremony, but a fellow who had served in the Mexican war played a tune on a bugle. Jim seemed to think Bill was the kind of fellow who didn't need any prayers.

From the very first Jim wouldn't allow any one to have any hand in the care of Annie, and it was a trifle awkward at times. There wasn't even a "Chink" laundryman in the camp in those days, every man being his own washerwoman. Jim had always got along the way every one else did. Used to tie a rope around his clothes and anchor them in the creek where the swish and whirl of the waters did all the work. Did it well, too, although it was a trifle hard on things. That's why everybody around the camp looked kind of bleached out, as if everything they had was from some place where colors weren't very strong.

When Jim fell heir to Annie, he took to snooping around the laundry end of some of the cabins, and it didn't leak out for quite a while that he had taken lessons in ironing, and brought flatirons up to his cabin from San Bernardino. The pains he used to take with Annie's sunbonnets and pinafores were probably more than he had ever taken with anything else in all his life. Got so he was as proud of his starching and ironing as a woman could be.

Some of the boys discovered him one day, with his white hat at an angle on the back of his head, his blue shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbows, and laboriously ironing away on a lot of tucking. Jim was strong on tucks and frills for Annie. It got around the camp, and one day somebody who didn't know him very well undertook to get funny about it. It took the big packer in a place where it evidently hurt. He declared himself.

"Seems to strike some of you sheepherders as funny," he said, "the way I take care of Annie. Maybe it's because you don't like the way the work's done, and maybe it's jest because you can't mind your own layouts. Well, I'm here to remark that the next feller that butts his nose into me and Annie's business is goin' to git hurt. I'll interfere with his features!"

Then he walked away; but after that he took more care with his laundry work than ever, and folks got used to it. Nobody ever said anything more,

because, as one of the boys remarked: "Jim had a flat-iron instead of a chip on his shoulder," and wasn't a safe man to have fun with.

Annie regularly joined the pack-train for the summer season. Men on the trail would hear the "Tink-tank" of a bell, and then around a sharp curve, maybe, would come a solemn-looking old burro, more careful now than ever to find sure footing, and on his back would be a very little girl in a very big sunbonnet, sometimes weaving wild-flower chains, or, again, singing little baby songs. Sometimes, too, Baldy came trudging along without her. That was when she could be found asleep in the arms of the big lank man, who soberly rode in the rear.

"You see," he used to explain with great gravity as though he knew more about babies than Mrs. Winslow, "she's jest like cubs, and kittens, and all them other cute little cusses. She jest naturally has to go to sleep about onct every so often, so's to git big and strong and purty."

Then he would ride on and catch up with Baldy, who would look back once in a while as if to make sure whether he could really trust the girl with Jim.

Again, you might come on them by their camp-fire at night, when the flames were shooting up and making the shadows of the trees look very deep and dark, and on a log would be sitting Jim telling stories to little Annie, whose eyes would be very open and very interested. If you looked hard you would probably find Baldy loafing around somewhere pretty close by.

They called the place where Bill Pape died "home," and although they kept the flowers and things looking neat and nice, the vegetables didn't get much care. Jim was too busy. Besides, Jim didn't seem to be much of a vegetable man.

"We've got to take care of this here place, Annie girl," he used to say, "because it's all you've got, and I promised your dad I'd look out for you."

Baldy gave a lot of trouble at first in his blundering way. He wasn't used to flower-beds and truck patches, and

thought that being a partner entitled him to eat most anything that was green around the place. Jim threatened to sell him, though, and maybe that was one reason he grew more careful. It was a very serious time.

"Baldy," Jim said, "you onery, no-account cuss, you've gone and eat the heads off four cabbages and five patches of marigolds, and now you've tried to swaller the rose-bush. I orter let you go to some feller bound for the desert where there ain't nothin' to eat; but I'm goin' to give you one more chance, and a dam good clubbin'."

So Baldy finally learned what not to eat.

Fall came along, and then there were occasional drifts of snow up in the high hills, and Jim was perplexed what to do with Annie. He didn't like the women of the camp, and he hated to have the girl away from him. So when he was down in San Bernardino, he took the advice of his warmest friend, "Jedge Gregg," and put her at school in the convent. It was a bitter parting and hard for her to understand. Jim talked to her as if she were almost a grown woman, instead of a five-year-old baby.

"Now, don't you feel bad, Annie girl," he consoled, as he patted her on the back. "I jest can't keep you with me, and I have to keep workin'. Besides, if I ain't lookin' out all the time and makin' a bluff at livin' on the place your daddy left you, somebody'll come along and jump your claim. There! There! Don't cry! I'll come and see you every trip, and"—his voice sank to a confidential whisper—"when summer comes again, and the brook is a-runnin' and the birds a-singin', you can hit the trail with me and Baldy, just like you've been doin'."

He walked around the room with her a few times, while the good sister waited, and concluded: "And you must learn to read, so's when you git back you can read to me, because I ain't strong on readin'."

With this final solace, he left her, and in time she grew to watch for his comings, and bear with his goings.

The winter came, when the snows fell deep, to be followed by the time when the milder air told of spring, and the land showed green again. Everything in the camp was the same, but in the city, in the valley far below, there was great excitement and stir. Capitalists had come who were going to build a big dam across the cañon below Jim's home, send their ditches over the valley below, and make the land worth something. Of course these men figured that Jim wouldn't give any trouble, and, if he did, it wouldn't amount to anything. He went ahead oblivious of all this until, on one of his trips, when he was coming away from the convent, a stranger stopped him in the street.

"You are Mr. James Tipton?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want to talk to you about that land you're squatting on up in the mountains. You'll have to get off."

Jim looked at the man in a daze, then woke up.

"Have to get off, eh? Squattin' on it, am I? That land belongs to my little Annie, and I'm her guardien, after a fashion. She's goin' to keep it unless she gets a mighty good price for it."

"Oh, no, she isn't," came the sneering rejoinder. "We've staked it legally, and you'll have to get off or be put off."

The man might have said more, but something checked his speech. It was Jim Tipton's two hands clenched round his throat and shaking him as if to jerk his head off.

"You keep off Annie's ground," Jim said between his teeth and with his head thrust out until his eyes were on a level with those of the other man. "And I'll tell you right now, stranger, I'll kill any man that comes on, and don't care if you happen to be the first one."

Then he let go his hold and left the man sitting in the street with a crowd around.

"They sure can't grab Annie's land," he muttered, "but it looks as if they're goin' to give me trouble, and I don't

know nothin' much about them things." So he decided to see his friend.

"Jim," the judge said, "I'll look the case up. I think your title is good; but in the meantime don't forget that possession means much. Possession may mean everything."

Jim said he would remember, and it was the first time since he came into the country that he went back light and driving his animals to the utmost, without filling his orders. He struck out for the pass in the hills at topmost speed, and drove his burros on long after the moon had risen. Their time of rest was short, and the dawn found them hurrying on again.

Throughout the day they went on, and on, and as he went Jim kept thinking and worrying over the turn that might go against Annie and her property. He believed he would be ahead of any others on the land, unless they had already been sent, and had waited for him to start the down-trip when they could put up their notices. He felt the need of reaching, in the very shortest time, the little cabin in the mountain's hollow, and when darkness fell once more there was small rest.

Another day of haste, and when night came he was close to his destination.

The little cavalcade swung over the brow of a hill and around a curve in the moonlight, which was strong, and came to a stop. They had been jumped and evicted in earnest, for below where the cabin had stood was now a heap of dying embers, and, lolling about a campfire but a short distance away, were four men in full possession.

Jim dropped from his saddle and stood for a moment as if planning his campaign. He knew that he must get to pretty close quarters before making his presence known. He started out into the open, and Baldy, tired but faithful, would have followed if Jim hadn't driven him back.

"Better keep out of trouble when you can, old man," he muttered. "I've got a little errand out there, so you stick here and grab grass while I go over and give a few kind words to them fel-

lers that's had a bonfire and have hopped Annie's ground."

The heavier grass which ran along the outer rim of the valley wriggled mysteriously for several minutes and the crickets stopped their creaky songs as he crawled along to get as far forward as possible. He would surprise them if he could get close enough, and if he couldn't—well, then it was up to the best side to make good.

He crept onward to where the grass was too short for concealment, and at the edge of a bare spot rested for a few minutes, with every nerve strung to a pitch.

It's strange how, when men know they are doing wrong, they get as alert as wild animals. Jim had hardly climbed to his feet and started warily toward them, when one of the men sighted him and swung a gun into view, shouting, as he did so: "Stop, or I'll shoot!"

Jim, seeing that further caution was useless, went ahead. If he had believed there was a chance of his getting closer he was mistaken. There was a crash, and all four men opened fire on him at once, without waiting to see whether his errand was peaceable or not. He had served too many years on the frontier to take chances, and their shots went above his head, because he had suddenly dropped flat upon the ground. Without hesitation, he fired back, and the one who had begun the battle pitched forward, and was out of the fight.

The others started to get away from the light of the fire which made them too good a target, but before they could do so Jim fired again. A second man staggered back, his gun falling from his hands, and did a wobbling turn, while Jim watched.

"I'd give it to you again," Jim thought, "but I'm a little shy on cartridges, and will take a chance on that one being enough."

The man staggered for a moment, then dropped to the ground, where he rolled over and over, but without offering further fight. Jim saw his fall, and then sprang up and forward, on the

run. The boiling in his blood caused by that first sight of the burned cabin had long ago given way to a cooler mood, but it was none the less deadly. He knew the chances he was taking in running forward, and resorted to the border trick of "buck-jumping" from side to side as he ran, rendering the aim of the enemy less certain.

One of the men stood his ground, and fired repeatedly. Jim felt a quick, searing shock that was followed by an instant's giddiness, but continued his forward rush. His opponent was apparently out of ammunition, and frantically snapped his hammer on empty shells. It was this alone that saved his life. Jim dropped his gun into aim, and his finger was convulsively tightening on the trigger, when he heard the harmless clicking, and lowered the weapon.

"Drop that gun and put your hands up," he shouted, "and tell your pardner to come alongside with his hands up. Quick! or I'll get you and tend to him later."

The jumper had sense enough to recognize that this was his only hope, and did as ordered. The other man, who had been in the background hurriedly reloading his pistol, came slowly forward with his hands in the air, and stopped beside his accomplice. No one spoke for an instant, and the whole scene was like a picture: two men standing there in the light of the night with their hands above their heads, while in front of them, with the glow bringing out the grimness of his face and the steady, cold glare of his eyes, was a man who leaned slightly forward with a poised pistol ready for instant action.

As if to add to the seriousness of it all, at one side rested a tragically still shape, and on the ground between them was seated another man who wove to and fro as if unconscious of the others and half-delirious from a wound in his breast which he clutched with both hands.

"Who hired you to jump my Annie's claim?" Jim asked of the man who had stood his ground, and now there was no drawl in his voice, but a sharp incisiveness.

The jumper hesitated, and didn't appear to want to answer. The packer's gun came suddenly into quick line with the man's head, and nothing but a brisk confession saved him. After that he was ready to talk. He realized that the one before him was in no mood to stop at anything, least of all his death. He read something in the grim, set face that sent a shuddering question through his mind as to whether even the answering of all questions would bring mercy. It seemed that at any moment now it might become an execution. Two examples of resistance were at his feet.

There was another instant's silence, in which time the man who had been rocking backward and forward on the ground gave another twist, sagged gently over on his side, and then stretched out his length, quiet and motionless. The men whose hands were in the air watched this convulsive movement with intent interest, but Jim's gaze never wavered from them. He had no pity for the others.

"I reckon you fellers were told to burn my Annie's cabin and to kill me if you could find 'an excuse, weren't you?"

"Yes," came the sullen answer, and Jim again seemed to be studying over something. Lights were dancing before his eyes, a kind of numbness was stealing over his heart, and it was hard work to keep from weaving about even as that man at his feet had done. He shut his teeth together hard in his determination to control himself and keep these two men before him from the knowledge that he was badly wounded. It must be done, he swore to himself, because it was for Annie, and all she had, and besides, he had promised to make good. But he must do something quick—before his own flame burned out.

"I ought to kill all of you," he said, and whatever effort he was making to keep steady was not betrayed in his voice. "I ought to kill you, but I'm goin' to give you a show."

He passed behind and searched them for more weapons, making sure that his work was thorough.

"Now," he ordered, "pick up your

pal at your feet, because maybe he'll pull through. I guess no one can help the other one. Hit it hard for the gorge, and if either of you looks back his light goes out, because I've got your rifle, and am a dead shot."

They picked their groaning comrade up and started.

"When you see your boss," Jim called after them, "tell him he'll pay for Annie's cabin or die the next time he meets me. He will, so help me God!"

They hurried off with the limp form between them, and Jim, beyond the fire-light, knelt weakly on his knees with a rifle shoving its menacing muzzle toward them. It seemed ready to carry his threat into instant execution. The moonlight gave them strange, distorted shapes as they passed away, grew smaller, more indistinct, and were finally taken into the shadows where the waterfall fell over into the blackness of the cañon. Neither had dared to look back. Jim's bluff had worked, and they disappeared, believing him unhurt and in deadly capability.

Jim settled down and ran his hand inside his shirt, where everything was sticky and warm. He looked at the big heap of coals, up at the hills which divided him from Holcomb where he knew were other men, and across the camp-fire to where a shaggy, white head, with two dark spots for eyes, looked gravely at him.

"Baldy," he said, "I'm about all in. Baldy, I guess——" He leaned upon his rifle and slowly gained his feet, after which he tried to take a step. He staggered toward the burro, determined that he would at least attempt to reach aid, then weakly pitched forward, muttering as he fell: "Jelge said there was much in possession, and I'm here yet. Annie, I'm here yet!"

The lights of the night now shone down on a world of stillness, a grass-strewn valley, bordered by great and solemn pines, and on a man who lay quiet, white, and motionless, while a lit-

tle burro strove to bring an answer from silent lips.

Now, Baldy didn't have a musical voice, but it was strong. There were two men riding along on the trail above who were friends of Jim's and his, and heard him calling for help. They stopped, saw the embers, and came down into the valley. They picked Jim up, drove the spurs deep into their tired horses, and struck over for Holcomb, and behind them, worried and keeping very close at their heels, came Baldy, pat-patting with his little feet and wondering in his way what it was all about. And while a doctor worked over Jim in the dance-hall, Baldy gazed solemnly through the open door, and no one disturbed him.

It was a good many months before Jim took to the trail again, and when he made his first trip he was pretty white and wan. He came to camp where the trees were thick and where he had so often stopped before, and, like many other times, a little girl huddled down between his knees and a big solemn head was at his shoulder.

"Annie," he said, "you're goin' to be rich some time, because some men have agreed to pay you for every gallon of water that runs over their dam; but there ain't goin' to be no home there any more for none of us. Some men are buildin' a lake to save water with."

The silence of the night was unbroken save for the lulling song of the brook and the lonesome yelp of a coyote, weird and mournful, in the distance.

"And we've got to find a new home where we can take good care of Baldy. He's really gittin' a little old and bent."

There came no answer. He stooped over and in the glow saw that she was fast asleep. Very gently he picked her up in his arms, her baby hand swinging listlessly down, and carried her toward the tent, saying softly:

"Sho! She's gone to sleep in her clean pinny, and—durn it all!—she forgot to say her prayers!"

THE FORTUNES OF WAR



By Rafael Sabatini

THE king lay at Oxford, and Sir Geoffrey Wilmot held as an outpost the sleepy town of Dorchester to keep open the lines of communication with the main body of the Royalist army. Strife hung in the air, as thunder hangs in a summer sky; steel and fire and bloody work impended; yet Captain Harry Masefield found it in his heart to pass the brooding hours in dalliance. It was in the blood of this pretty gentleman to make love whenever the time served, and in the old rakish days at Whitehall, he had strewn his path with more love-affairs than he could count years to his age. Yet in his irresponsible, volatile heart they had been no more than the fancies of a leisure hour, the very fruits of the sunny idleness in which he had dwelt. It had remained for a simple, Puritan maid, in whose father's house the chance of war had quartered him, to arouse in him, during those days of stress, a deep and lasting passion, such as had been evoked by none of his fine ladies in the departed time of careless ease.

For a while he suppressed his feelings, almost strove to conquer them, and, being content with Kate's sweet companionship during those days at Dorchester, resolved to seek nothing more. But his passion swelled despite him, growing more violent—perhaps by virtue of its very suppression—until there came a fine June day when it exploded.

They were seated in the dappled shade of an oak, by the sparkling waters of the Thames, and their talk had grown desultory, for the heat was one to beget a dreamy languor. Suddenly the Cavalier turned to his companion, and, without warning, cast his heart, like a bombshell, at her feet.

"Kate, I love thee." Through much former use of them the words came glibly from the young man's lips; but his face was grown of a sudden white and earnest, which never had been so before.

A tremor ran through the girl, and she sat with averted face, her brown eyes staring at the sheen of water. Masefield took the little hand that lay beside him.

"Sweet—" he began, and with that he broke the spell that had descended on her.

"Don't!" she cried in a sob. "I may not hear you. We were such friends, and now you have spoiled all."

"Spoiled?" quoth he, leaning toward her, his voice quiver. "Nay, sweet; not spoiled—"

"Aye! spoiled," she interrupted, and the eyes she turned on him were oddly bright and full of pain. "I may walk with you no more hereafter, and I have so grown to love our roamings, for you have ever been what they tell me that your kind is not." She paused a moment, then, with a little break in her voice, she gave him the key to the situation. "I am betrothed."

He sat very still, his eyes reflecting now the pain in hers, his fingers toying

absently with the jewel in his ear. It was an odd irony that this simple maid, who had been the first to awaken sincerity in his heart, should also be the first to administer him a rebuff. He bore it well, and with a gentle and becoming dignity inquired the name of his most enviable foresteller.

"It is Master Coote," she answered him. "His father was my father's friend."

"A man to be envied, this good Master Coote," he sighed. "Yet my envy shall not conquer my good feelings. Count me ever thy friend, Kate. I will plague thee no more with protestations, little friend. Canst trust me?"

She held out her hands to him, and the tears, suppressed till now, flowed forth and puzzled him. Here was no matter for tears that he could see. But, respectful of the wishes she had expressed, he questioned her no further. Nor did he ever again permit his passion to betray itself, lest such a thing should interrupt the old, sweet tenor of their relations, which had been renewed. Master Coote's name was never mentioned between them, but Masefield had a suspicion that in the present conflict her betrothed was on the other side—at least in sympathies. He remembered that on the day after the arrival of the Royalists at Dorchester, a man of that name had applied to Sir Geoffrey for a safe conduct, giving out that he wished to visit a sick brother at Wallingford. From that alleged errand of mercy he returned a week after Masefield's avowal to Kate, and Harry met him at his host's house, whither he was come to pay his duties to Master Ashton and to Kate. He was a lank, swarthy, stern-featured youth, and his somber raiment, close-cropped head, and drawling speech confirmed Masefield in his suspicions concerning him. But he held his peace, and went his ways, until that befell which came to compel his concern in Master Coote's affairs.

Meanwhile, though Coote might have complained—had he been a warmer-blooded man himself—of the coolness of his reception by Kate, he found no

lack of cordiality in the welcome extended him by her father. Master Ashton was unfeignedly glad to see him, and to be able to pour, unrestrained, into his ear, his strictures upon the disjointed nature of the times.

"I hope," he had said, "thou'l bide in Dorchester, now that thou'r't returned."

"I shall bide here just so long as my service to Israel demands," was Coote's answer, nasal and not over-gracious.

"Why, then, I trust it may keep thee long."

"No longer than to-night. My work is done, and I am going my ways. Hark you, Master Ashton, for it is well you should know what to expect, and thou, too, Kate. I am come at the bidding of General Lambert to stir up a scourge for the destruction of these Amalekites that Dorchester hath harbored. 'Tis thus: To-morrow, at dead midnight, Lambert makes a camisade upon them, and, taking them by surprise, shall wreck them as utterly as was that Babylon whence they belong. His force is slight, but half that of these malignants. Hence his need to take them in their beds. And to the end that none may escape am I come to enjoin all true followers of the Lord, all godly men that dwell in Dorchester, to arm and rise, once the attack has been delivered, and, joining forces with us, see to it that no man of them all escapes the hell for which he is overripe."

Father and daughter stared at him as he finished his impassioned speech. Both were pale, and from the eyes of both horror stared forth. At last, it was the old man who spoke.

"But it is murder that ye plan!" he cried. "Think you this will prove sightly in the eyes of the Lord?"

"The Lord of hosts hath set His hand against them," answered Coote. "Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith?"

The old man shook his head sorrowfully. This warring with texts on the lips and a sword of treachery in the hand chilled him with mistrust in the ultimate success of the side to which he belonged.

It was sunset, the evening meal was spread, and Coote bidden to table, where the talk shifted to lighter things, to the expression of hopes that were to be fulfilled in the days when strife should be at an end. Kate sat silent and abstracted, her mind full of the grim news she had heard, and her thoughts straying to Masefield, the friend whom this upheaval had brought her, the man who had said that he loved her. Did she love him? It was a question she had not dared set herself. She had thrilled when he had spoken of his passion for her, but she had never paused to ask herself from what source was sprung her exquisite distress. Her duty was to Coote, to whom she was promised, and her stern, uncompromising rearing made her set duty and her plighted word above all other earthly considerations. Besides, she loved Coote—at least, until Masefield came into her life she had never given a thought to any other man.

Yet, as her mind now dwelt on Masefield and on what must be his fate upon the morrow, her affection for Coote seemed a light thing in the balance against her pity for the blithesome Cavalier.

The drone of the men's voices offered no hindrance to the free course of her thoughts, nor was she roused from them until a brisk knock fell suddenly upon the door.

"It will be Captain Masefield," said her father, his glance following her as she went to open. But the man that glided past her into the chamber bore no resemblance to the debonair captain.

"Master Coote," he cried excitedly, "praise the Lord I've found you! I have a note for you, and I was told that there is life and death at issue."

"For whom?" asked the Puritan coldly, taking the scrap of folded paper.

"For whom but for you?" the messenger replied.

Coote was reading, and as he read, his sallow cheeks grew sallower.

"Lord save me!" he muttered. Then to the man: "Who gave it thee?"

"I knew him not. I met him at the

corner of the High, a fellow tightly muffled in a cloak. But he bade me hasten if I loved you, for your life might hang upon my speed."

Coote thanked and dismissed the messenger, and, rising, took up his hat and cloak. A moment he looked at that black livery and his steeple hat, and he seemed to pause. Next, his roving eye caught a claret-colored cloak and a gray-feathered castor hanging from a peg. They were Masefield's, and, with a cry of joy, he pounced on them. Then to his amazed companions he vouchsafed at last an explanation:

"Here is what is written:

"You are betrayed. A man has reached Dorchester from Wallingford, with the information that you are a spy in the service of General Lambert. As you value your neck, get you gone at once."

"Joseph!" they both cried, agast. He shrugged his shoulders, an heroic calm in his demeanor.

"I will cheat them, never fear," said he. "But should I fail to escape, I may die content, since betrayal did not come until my task was accomplished. At least, their nimble spy can have no knowledge of the scourge that awaits these Amalekites. If I live I shall be in Dorchester again by midnight to-morrow. If not, there are others who will take my place. Farewell!"

He was gone, and Ashton was offering consolation to his child, bidding her be brave and trustful in the Lord, when again the door opened, and Masefield entered briskly.

"Is he gone?" he asked.

"Were you the friend who sent him that warning?" cried Kate.

"Could I have done less, knowing—" He paused, remembering her father. But she understood what he would have said, even as she appreciated the nobility of what he had done for her sake. "Yes," he added, "it was I. I may have failed in my duty, but, after all, Master Coote's life can be no matter of such importance as to make my breach of trust lie heavy on my conscience. It was fortunate I had it in my power to serve you."

The tramp of feet sounded without.

"Soldiers," said Masefield, jerking his thumb in the direction of the sound. "They are losing no time in searching for him. I had best withdraw."

He had surmised correctly. An ensign and six men, having already ransacked Coote's dwelling, were come to act upon the information that he might be found at Master Ashton's. The ensign was courteous but firm, and his men searched the house, while Masefield, reappearing, engaged his brother officer in conversation.

Their duty done, they departed to seek elsewhere. But morning was to prove that the spy had made good his escape, a matter at which Sir Geoffrey shrugged his massive shoulders. They were overstrong at Dorchester to be in fear of the small force that lay at Wallingford with Lambert. So the Royalist commander slept tranquilly that night, as did his followers, one and all.

It was the Parliament's friends in Dorchester who were wakeful, awaiting the signal to rise up and help in the slaughter of the Amalekite.

Kate lay wide-eyed on her bed, a horror in her soul at what was to come, a fierce conflict in her mind. It was to Masefield's generous and disinterested warning that her betrothed owed his life, and was Masefield to be slaughtered in his slumber for reward? By allowing it, it seemed to her she did a monstrous thing, and yet were she to warn him it would be an act of betrayal, not only of the trust that Coote reposed in her, but of the side to which from her cradle she belonged.

She heard the clock chime eleven. Another hour and the Parliamentarians would be there, and Dorchester would be washed in blood. Tortured, she lay and prayed to Heaven for guidance, and guidance came to her at last. Warn Masefield she must; but she need not do so until, while it would leave him time to save himself, it would be too late for him to spread the alarm which might frustrate the Roundhead purpose.

She rose, and, having lighted a taper, she scribbled a note, then sat waiting until half-past eleven chimed from the

church-tower. Some moments longer she delayed, then stealthily she crept up-stairs to the chamber occupied by Masefield. She had to knock twice ere he was roused—for, lest her father should hear, she dared not strike loudly—then she thrust her scrap of paper 'neath his door, and was gone as silently as she had come.

She regained her room as a quarter to twelve was striking, and overhead she heard sounds which informed her that the captain was stirring. She sat on the bed in the dark, her pulses racing, and waited. Five minutes passed; then she caught a sound of soft steps descending. They halted a moment at her door, then passed on.

After he had gone she sat on, with clenched hands, shuddering at the thought that already he might be too late. Suddenly midnight boomed out, the preconcerted knell of the Royalists in Dorchester.

She went to the window, and, setting it wide, leaned out in that summer night, to listen for the horrid sounds that should announce Lambert's arrival. But the silence continued unbroken. They were late.

The first quarter struck, and she marveled that all should continue still. Then suddenly there came a stir. Men moved in the streets, hastening hither and thither, and to their movements rang the harsh accompaniment of arms. Were these Lambert's men? Across the way some one was knocking at a door, and from the gloom she presently heard a voice.

"Afoot, there, Ensign Wantley. To arms! We are beset."

Then she understood what was taking place. Masefield had given the alarm, and the Royalists were rising to defend themselves. Meanwhile Lambert came not. If he should come now, she realized, he would find the tables turned, and would come to his destruction. In a very frenzy she fell on her knees by the open window, and, with her eyes to the stars, she prayed God to pardon the evil that unwittingly she had wrought, prayed God that Lambert might not come at all, and while

she knelt there in prayers and self-reviling, she heard the half-hour strike.

"Thank God!" she cried. "They will not come."

But her prayers availed not. In spite of them Lambert arrived. It had been decided by his officers that midnight was overearly. Many of the ungodly malignants kept late hours, and sat till midnight at their dice and cards and other deviltries. And so, to his undoing, he had been prevailed upon to delay the attack until one o'clock, when they should be more certain of finding the malignants in their beds.

Instead, the Royalists were up, and waiting for them as they crept into Dorchester town. The Roundheads had butchered the outposts, and gone forward without interruption till Lambert halted them in the market-place, there to give his officers their last instructions. And then, of a sudden, it seemed as if the little square had taken fire. From its four sides a mighty scythe of flame cut through the darkness, and mowed them down as though they had been a field of grass at haytime.

A great cry arose, sounding above the thunder and crackle of that deadly fusillade. Blasphemy burst from lips better schooled in utterance from Holy Writ, and those that had escaped caught up their arms, a wild, disordered mob in which each sought to hew himself a way out of this death-trap that had sprung up about them. Fighting desperately, they retreated down the streets, the Royalists surging everywhere, and showing no mercy to these men who were come to butcher them in their beds. The shirts, which by Lambert's orders they had put on over their armor, that they might know one another in that night's work, now helped forward their undoing, serving as a guide to the Cavaliers.

Some few who had retained something of their wits made haste to pluck off these badges, and among these was Coote, who realized that the present was a time for shelter, not heroics. With this intent he made his way toward Ashton's house. He found the street comparatively quiet, and his sharp knock

was answered by Ashton himself with as much speed as even Coote's frenzied haste could have hoped for.

Into the house he stumbled, curses on his pious lips, for it was a monstrous evil hour, and the hand of God seemed set against those who called themselves His people.

"Woe! Woe!" he howled. "We have been betrayed, delivered into the hands of these Egyptians."

"Tell me of it," Master Ashton besought him, and in fierce, burning words the Roundhead told him how they had been hoist with their own petard.

A while the old man listened carefully, anon desultorily, for so interlarded with texts and proverbs was the Puritan's speech as to grow wearisome even in the ears of one of his own persuasion. And while he sat and listened the old man's eyes were attracted by a slip of paper at his feet. Idly he took it up. It was Kate's note to Masefield, which the Cavalier had dropped there as he fled. A cry of anguish burst from Ashton to interrupt the speaker.

"What is?" quoth Coote.

"This!" cried Ashton, proffering the paper. Then he suddenly withdrew it. "No, no!" he added, a note of fear in his voice. "Tis not for thee, lad."

A moment Coote looked at him perplexed. Then a glimmer, a half-suspicion of what it might be flashing through his mind, he advanced.

"Give it me," he demanded hoarsely. Ashton held up his hand, as if to ward him off.

"No, no," he repeated. "It concerns thee not."

"Give it me," the other insisted. He was mad with the night's happening, and ripe for any violence. Ere the old man knew it, the paper was in Coote's fingers, and he was reading Kate's note:

Save yourself. You are to be attacked at midnight by General Lambert. Go quietly, nor seek to thank me, lest my father should hear you.

"Hell and damnation!" roared that pious gentleman. "Where lurks this wanton?"

As if to answer him, the door opened

at that moment, and Kate, pale and haggard of face, stood before him, little recking the discovery he had made. At sight of her, a blind fury took him, and his hand flew to his sword. Old Ashton looked about him for a weapon.

"Nay, nay," cried the old man. "Thou shalt do no bloodshed here!"

"You say well," Coote answered grimly. "It shall not be done here. It shall be some hangman's task. Come with me," he snarled at Kate, "thou drab, thou——"

"Father——" she began appealingly.

"Come with me," thundered the Puritan, striding to the door. He flung it open, turned, and stood waiting. "Must I drag thee hence?" he asked, and, seeing that she stirred not, he strode to her and caught her fiercely by the wrist. At that, old Ashton was moved to anger. With a growl, he sprang at Coote, who met his onrush with a blow that felled him. Then, seizing the half-fainting girl in his arms, he carried her bodily from the house. In the street he came upon a dozen fugitive Roundheads. He halted them with a shout.

"Here is the wanton that hath sold us unto Egypt; here is the traitress!" he screamed. "We go not hence without her."

Over Shillingford Bridge a party of frenzied, fugitive Roundheads made their panic-stricken way. They numbered little over twenty men, and they represented well-nigh all that was left of the thirty score who had marched that night to Dorchester. Lambert and a half-dozen with him had already passed them, riding at the gallop for Wallingford to gather up such belongings as imported and get them away ere Sir Geoffrey's force swept down on them.

With the men at the bridge was a woman whom two were half-supporting, half-carrying. They got across, up the slope that faced them, and down the other side. At the foot of that hill Coote called a halt. He was the only surviving officer, and they looked to him for guidance.

"Bring forth the woman," he com-

manded, his voice rough and hoarse from the much that he had shouted. "Here is a tree will serve our purpose. No need to burden ourselves further with this baggage."

They had no rope, but he removed his sash, which was some ten feet long when unwound.

"'Twas wrought by her hands," he sneered. "What fitter halter than this love-gift?" And his gloomy eyes sought her face in the pale light of the dawning day.

She stood before him, very white; but, for all that horrid terror was in her glance, her lips never moved to entreat, nor to speech of any kind.

"Hast naught to say?" he growled, angered by this stubborn silence.

She stirred at that; a little color crept into her cheeks.

"Do with me as you will," said she, in an emotionless voice. "I am sorry, and I ask Heaven to pardon the destruction of life that has been wrought through my action. But I meant not to betray, and God, with whom our motives count for more than the outward seeming of our deed, will judge me accordingly. I accounted the warning I gave Captain Masefield as the just discharge of a debt we owed, for it was he who sent you word last night that you were betrayed."

"Better he had let me die——" he began, then broke off, and smiled on her mighty evilly. "Is that all?" quoth he.

"All," she answered, lowering her head.

"On thy knees, daughter of Baal!" he thundered. "Ask pardon of God. Thy sands are run."

Mechanically she obeyed him, falling on her knees and turning her brave soul to prayer, realizing that her end was at hand.

Coote turned to his men, and held out the sash he had doffed.

"Who will perform the justice of the Lord on this woman?" he asked.

In silence those gloomy, beaten men looked at one another, but none made him answer. Three in succession he called by name, commanding them to do

this thing. But one by one they answered him that they were not hangmen. He let fall the scarf at last, growling his displeasure and his contempt of them, and from his belt he plucked a pistol.

"It shall be my task, then," he muttered. "Woman, when thou'rt ready put forth thy hands; nor keep me waiting overlong."

Thus in silence they stood, all eyes upon the kneeling girl. What was that, behind them, on the slope? The morning wind rustling through the trees? They heard it not, so intent were they, nor stirred until, like a peal of thunder, a volley of musketry crashed down the hillside and poured its hail into their group.

"The malignants are upon us!" screamed one.

Coote raised his eyes and caught the gleam of steel and flash of colors of the company, some three score strong,

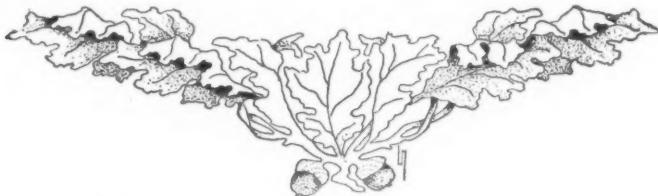
that swept down the hill toward them. With an oath, he leveled his pistol at Kate. She shut her eyes, but ere he could fire, a bullet took him in the throat. He spun round on his heel, and fell, his pistol going off and raising a spurt of dust where the bullet cut a furrow in the ground.

Strong arms lifted Kate from the ground, where she had fallen, fainting, at the last moment; strong arms pressed her to a cuirassed bosom and stirred her to awake and look incredulously into Masefield's good gray eyes.

"Kate, my little Kate," he panted. "I love thee, Kate, I love thee!"

And there in that shambles, under the eyes of those rough men of war, the Puritan maid came to understand what her heart told her. And what her heart told her, her lips told him.

"I love thee, Harry," she whispered. "Thank God you came!" And she fell a-sobbing in his arms.



A CITY SONG-BIRD

IN the cool silence that presages morn,
I caught the gush of a strayed reveler
In song, some wanderer from the forest fir,
Or from the meads betwixt the fields of corn;
So full of rapture was it, and not shorn
One note of ecstasy, of poignant stir,
That far from all the city's moil and whir
To the untrammeled uplands I was borne:—

To the unravished temple of the trees,
Whence came this feathered sibyl to declare
The lyric spirit is not dead and gone,
But lingers in the unsubstantial air,
Sighs in the leaves and whispers in the breeze,

And breathes from out the auroral heart of dawn!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

BY A FIRST NIGHTER

The prognostications and self-glorification of managers and actors. Arnold Daly's unique scheme. Mr. Daly criticizes the critics. Henrietta Crosman tells of her new play, "The Christian Pilgrim," and what she hopes to accomplish with it. The story of "John Gladye's Honor" which James K. Hackett is shortly to produce. E. H. Sothern discloses his plans for the season. Maude Adams to have a new play in "The Jesters"



ACH year the circus is "bigger and better than ever before." And each year the manager and actor are more hopeful and more noisy than ever before. Press the pianissimo pedal against the actor and you subdue his art. Gag the manager and—well, who ever heard of a dumb manager?

In the regular routine of theatrical events the manager is conceded priority in the matter of issuing proclamations. He mounts the platform some time in July, and rivals the political stump-speaker in the prodigality of his promises. Nothing is too costly or too enterprising for the theatrical manager to promise. He is a human promissory note written in blank, leaving the amount to be filled out according to the elasticity of his imagination. With such reverence as could be mustered his pledges already have been recorded by the faithful press.

Now, the less blustering and more stately actor takes his turn. Concentration dominates him. His thoughts and his expressions are concentrated upon himself. The manager speaks about

plays; the actor speaks about one part—his own.

Had Diogenes patrolled Broadway during the month of August he might not have found the honest man for whom he has long been seeking, but he might have collected a sizzling set of autobiographies, compared with which Caesar's account of the conquest of Gaul would seem modest to the point of diffidence and reticence.

All last season at the Broadway Theater Anna Held sang "I Just Can't Make My Eyes Behave." The same song would be appropriate to almost any actor on the Rialto if transposed to read "I Just Can't Make My I's Behave."

Whenever there is any self-exploitation going on, trust Arnold Daly to demand the floor. This young man is now to the fore with a positively unique scheme. It will be executed at the Berkeley Lyceum Theater, where many other novel schemes in days gone by have been executed.

Mr. Daly this time purposed to operate without critics, without the aid of the newspapers' advertising columns—without, in fact, the aid of anything in particular except Arnold Daly.

Before specifying his plans in detail, Mr. Daly pauses to condemn vaudeville, a somewhat ungrateful act on his part, for, at this writing, Mr. Daly is appearing twice a day in the varieties, and it is suspected that a part of the revenue he derives from this labor will give his ventures at the Berkeley Lyceum their financial impetus.

Mr. Daly will speak for himself, taking occasion in passing to twist the nose of his ancient enemy, the critic.

"The time is at hand for the establishment of a theater for the thinking public, and such a theater I hope to make of the Berkeley. I do not propose to cater to any cult, to faddists, or to those who may fancy themselves extremists in the matter of stage lore. Children best amused are those who go to hippodromes where may be found dogs, monkeys, and a general run of pachydermata in exhibitions akin to human intelligence.

"The musical comedy thrives and vaudeville has not, as yet, lost its vogue—in fact, it seems stronger than ever—but such forms of entertainment are for the every-day class of folk. Personally, I feel that men and women of superior intellectual attainments want something more, and I hope to give it to them.

"There will be given each night three plays of one act each. In two of these plays I shall appear, supported by Mr. Holbrook Blinn, Miss Helen Ware, and other capable players. The other play will be given by a celebrated Japanese tragedienne, Madame Han Ako, whom I am bringing to America for my season, and her own company.

"It may be of interest to those who care for novelties to observe that protracted engagements are barred. Five weeks will be the life of any play, no matter what its success may be. The actor who attempts to interpret any given rôle for, say, a thousand performances, must of necessity become absolutely mechanical, and, although it may please the manager to keep him at it, the public does not get that man's best work.

"The Berkeley is not going to be a

money-mad theater. I hope for patronage, but I am not going to solicit it as do other theaters molded along mere commercial lines. I shall not advertise in the daily newspapers, nor shall I issue free passes. Should my mother desire admission she must pay as every other person pays.

"The opening bill will be made up of 'The Arab Gardener,' from the French of Pierre Elzear; 'The Flag Station,' by Charles A. Kenyon, and Madame Han Ako in 'The Martyr.' Among the other plays to be produced are 'Becoming an Editor,' by Mark Twain; 'The Shirkers,' by C. M. S. McLellan; 'The Monkey's Paw,' by W. W. Jacobs and Louis N. Parker, and 'Washington's First,' by Charles F. Nirdlinger.

"The curtain will rise at nine o'clock, that those who eat may digest before lending their presence to the play.

"That I have abandoned the Shaw plays entirely is ridiculous, but the lighter form of play is just as amusing and interesting, and affords mental rest. I shall always do revivals of the Shaw comedies.

"But, whatever the offering—good, bad, or indifferent—I cannot too strongly condemn the attitude of the New York press toward the stage. In other cities dramatic criticism is given with earnestness, whereas in New York it seems an infliction to treat a play with seriousness.

"Those critics whose stomachs are not sick with the bile of spleen, and who are clear-lived and fair-minded, unfortunately waste their manhood in the terrible and painful effort to be funny. Jerome K. Jerome says that all Americans are trying to be funny, and that there is really no chance for the poor humorist.

"If a man commits suicide, the editor at once takes that as an opportunity to exploit his possibilities as a humorist. Recently, during a famous murder trial, a club composed of lawyers and doctors gave a banquet, at which they had burlesque speeches on the trial and the expert testimony, so we have the spectacle of gentlemen of education and

alleged breeding making a pitiable show of themselves in a futile effort to be funny at the expense of an unfortunate being.

"This is the attitude of the New York critic toward everything on the stage. They must all be funny—at any sacrifice, they must be funny.

"The offerings of foreign actors who visit our shores are greeted with rare seriousness. Strange to say, the critics cannot understand the virtues or faults of the foreigners' efforts, not understanding their language, but lo! whatever he or she does is great. Familiarity doth breed contempt, indeed, when the critic is called to judge the native actor.

"That your critic has no attributes for his office is easily proven if you read him well. Any mediocre actor could take a first-class critic's criticism and tear its reasoning to pieces, because he really knows a little concerning whereof he speaks, while your critic is not even an enthusiastic theorist, or, as Shaw says, 'He who can does; he who cannot teaches.'

"Criticism is the only thing connected with the theater that has not only stood still, but degenerated in the last century. In Edmund Kean's time the critic had to know whereof he wrote. Today, with the acting methods having advanced a hundredfold, we have police reporters boldly attempting that which scholars in Kean's time timidly and reverently and conscientiously approached.

"Sir Henry Irving was a great genius, a great actor, and a great man. Augustin Daly was easily the greatest manager New York has ever produced. Both these giants of the drama treated these irresponsible assassins of the pen, as Forrest called them, in the only way by which you can obtain from them continued favorable comment. They always gave them plenty to eat and drink, thus proving that their brains were in their stomachs, and then tickled their vanity by naming dogs and children after them."

After this outburst one may easily understand why Mr. Daly will not welcome the critics.

In contrast is the tone of apprehension which Henrietta Crosman, a really brilliant actress, assumes in discussing her season's work. Her undertaking in presenting a dramatic-musical version of "The Pilgrim's Progress," under the title "The Christian Pilgrim," employing an orchestra of forty-five musicians and a chorus of fifty singers, is of indubitable importance.

"In all my life," declares Miss Crosman, "I have known only two parts that I have actually loved. One was *Rosalind*, and the other is *Christian* in 'The Christian Pilgrim.' I call 'The Christian Pilgrim' a music play, and that about describes it, for it is very near grand opera. As I see it, the music is as important as the words, and really with the music that has been composed for it the play might be done in pantomime. I think that's the way with all great works. They are understandable to all people in any language. Of course, in such a case, the beauties of speech are lost. But the great story will carry. It cannot be misinterpreted.

"What do I expect to accomplish in the playing of this part of *Christian*? That's a big question. I have so many hopes, that to tell them all would take till my brain had ceased to think.

"In the first place, I hope that this play will do a great good to humanity. No one can see it without being bettered by it, and that is the great province of the stage. There are more lessons learned in the theater than anywhere else, and, what is more, the lessons learned there sink deeper and remain with us longer.

"This part is a very serious work for me, the most serious I have ever undertaken, and I approach it with fear and trembling. In the first place, I am attempting to portray, not any special character, but mankind in general. The character is symbolic, so that its scope is unlimited. I frankly admit that I am scared to death at attempting to play the biggest part I have ever played in almost the biggest theme that was ever written. To see this you have only to realize that 'The Pilgrim's Progress'

has been read by millions, and that every one of these millions of readers has formed an ideal of his *Christian*. Can I satisfy all these idealists? That is the question. Will I satisfy even the major portion? You see, it is a big undertaking that is going to make the other little parts that I have played shrink into insignificance. I hope to accomplish all this.

"And then I hope that I shall rise in my profession. Of course, that is a selfish hope, and perhaps concerns only myself. In my rise or fall the public is little interested; but still I have that hope. If I can accomplish all this, or perhaps a small part of it, how devoutly I shall say, as *Christian* says: 'Sorrow endureth but for a night, until day-break, and the shadows flee away.'"

In revealing in advance what seems likely to prove one of the most powerful scenes in store for the season's expectant theatergoers, one feels the guilt of a boy telling tales out of school. But since London has for six months been finding delight in "John Glayde's Honor," it seems high time that the American public should get some idea of that play, promised to us in November. James K. Hackett, who has chosen this play for himself, is of the opinion that Alfred Sutro, the author, has modeled the character of *John Glayde* after one of America's richest subpoena-dodgers.

"At least, Mr. Sutro has been praised far and wide," says Mr. Hackett, "for having grasped the full dramatic significance of the American man of millions. The strange anomaly that presents itself in this case is that an English author should first have thought of the story found in '*John Glayde's Honor*,' which reveals a domestic condition that is the direct result of business absorption on the part of a Wall Street magnate, disclosing the inner tragic life of the American man of finance, who has no time for affection in his unceasing, mad chase for more millions and increased power. The whole substance of the play may be gleaned from the following few lines of dialogue between *Mrs. Rennick* and *Muriel*, *Glayde's* wife:

"*Mrs. Rennick*—I had quite forgotten that you had a husband, Muriel.

"*Muriel*—I have to pinch myself sometimes to remember. I have scarcely seen him these last two or three years.

"*Mrs. Rennick*—Really!

"*Muriel*—You see, he works eighteen hours a day. He does nothing but work.

"Mr. Sutro evinced great interest in our men of finance when he visited America two years ago, and I have no doubt '*John Glayde's Honor*' is the immediate result of his observations made at that time."

Mr. Hackett refrains from describing the powerful scene just before the end of the play, in which, in the rôle of *John Glayde*, he will deliver one of the most impressive speeches that have ever fallen to the lot of an actor. The scene takes place after the money-mad *John Glayde* has been awakened to a realization of the true state of his domestic affairs.

He has been advised to go at once to Paris, where his wife has fallen in love with *Trevor Lerode*, an artist. On discovering that not only does *Lerode* love his wife, but that she loves him, he tells *Muriel* that he regrets his neglect of her, that they will start afresh with a new honeymoon, and curtly informs *Lerode* that his wife's visits to the studio must cease. *Lerode* and *Muriel* both oppose him; she first with evasion, and finally with lying and caresses. As soon as she has allayed her husband's suspicion, and persuaded him to leave her for a certain embassy reception, she flies direct to her lover's studio, whence they have planned to elope.

Glayde learns of his wife's flight, dashes after her, and confronts her in the studio. He appeals to her by tender argument and threatens her with fearful punishment. She, now desperate and at bay, rejoices openly in the lies she has told him and in her adoration of *Lerode*.

At this trying moment, Mr. Sutro has reversed his usual procedure and the conventions of all modern drama-

tists. This is the point where ordinarily the playwright would project his "big" speech, the marital thunder-storm. Instead of verbal pyrotechnics, however, *Glayde* gains control of his feelings, turns to the lover, and says quietly but with an earnestness that is almost awe-inspiring:

"This woman loves you. She used to be my wife. She loves you beyond anything else—honesty, truth, shame. She has made the greatest of all sacrifices for you—she has lied and betrayed. Take her away. I shall divorce her; you can get married. I shall make provision for her, that she may never want. Take her and help her—to lie and betray no more."

Then, without looking at either of them, he moves slowly to the door and goes out. His step is heard on the stone outside, then the clang of the gate. Neither of the guilty pair stirs. They are bewildered, and stand with heads bowed while the curtain slowly falls.

Should further evidence of a season of important productions be required, it is to be found in E. H. Sothern's earnest comment on his repertoire. Owing to Richard Mansfield's retirement from the stage this season, Mr. Sothern becomes, for the time being, at least, the foremost actor-manager in America.

"It has been deemed noteworthy," he remarks, "that Miss Marlowe and myself have been able to present the class of plays to which we have devoted ourselves, and at the same time 'make a commercial success. I confess a penchant for plays that are not exactly popular in the ordinary sense of the word. For example, nobody would believe that Miss Marlowe and I could make a profit out of plays like 'The Sunken Bell' and 'John the Baptist,' but we did.

"During this season my repertoire

will consist of 'Our American Cousin,' 'Don Quixote,' 'If I Were King,' 'Hamlet,' 'The Shepherd,' and 'Crime and Punishment.' In 'Our American Cousin' I shall play the rôle of *Lord Dundreary*, he of the eye-glasses and side-whiskers, which my father made celebrated in three countries—England, America, and Australia. I have waited a number of years before hazarding one of the rôles which my father made famous.

"Because *Malvolio* has been said to be one of my best Shakespearian characterizations, I have decided to include another fop in my repertoire, and for that purpose have chosen the character of the Spanish knight, *Don Quixote*, whose quaintness and humor certainly present dramatic possibilities.

"'The Shepherd' is a romantic play taken from the book of that name, which has had quite a vogue in literary circles. 'Crime and Punishment' is a dramatization by Laurence Irving, son of Sir Henry Irving, of the celebrated Russian novel of that name, written by Dostoyevsky.

In view of this statement one may, therefore, believe the story which is told of Mr. Sothern, who in reply to the question as to what he most desired to be, replied:

"Perpetual motion."

Gentle Maude Adams, most delightful of all actresses, shrinks timidly from any discussion of her new play, "*Les Bouffons*," which in English will be called "The Jesters." Her rôle is that of *Chicot*, a hunchback, and, instead of outlining a scheme whereby the critics may be placated by free lunch, she is wondering if her critics and her public will resent her continuance in masculine rôles.

As for Wright Lorimer, he pledges himself in "The Quicksands" to "carry a glowing message to humanity."



FOR BOOK LOVERS

*Archibald
Lowery
Sessions*

Is there a demand for distinctly American fiction? Ainslee's always gives the best that can be secured. The November number one of more than usual interest. "Satan Sanderson" by Hallie Erminie Rives original and entertaining. E. Phillips Oppenheim, always interesting, holds his own in "A Lost Leader". Warwick Deeping shows marked improvement in "A Woman's War." Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s, "The Traitor" very cheap and tawdry melodrama. "The Conflict" by Constance Smedley interesting and fresh, though rather illogical. "The Princess" by Margaret Potter has emotional quality but is somewhat distressing. Henry M. Rideout's "The Siamese Cat" very nicely balanced and makes easy reading. "Norroy, Diplomatic Agent" by George Bronson-Howard sensational, even melodramatic, but, nevertheless, very entertaining.

I T may or may not be true, as some people profess to believe, that there is a growing demand among American readers for fiction that is distinctly and typically American. It is an opinion which, so far, at least, seems to have no surer foundation than the theory that people get the most satisfaction in accounts of scenes, customs, and persons with which they are familiar. It may be admitted that this theory is correct, at the same time pointing out that its application in the present instance is misleading.

It would be much nearer the truth to say that fiction which presents a vivid picture of humanity, which possesses a deep, vital, convincing human interest, is always in demand among all sorts of readers, whether the story is American or British.

It is, of course, going too far to say that the demand to-day is for something to read, no matter what it is; there is such a thing as preference and discrimination, but the difficulty lies in the fact that the mass of fiction is so great that the best of it is easily overlooked.

AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE gives its readers the very best that can be secured always. Sometimes an English story is published, but it is not because the story is English, but because it has in it an appeal to human sympathy so universal that the question of nationality is not to be considered.

It happens that the two leading features in this month's issue are American stories. The serial, "Ewing's Lady," by Harry Leon Wilson, is perhaps more distinctly so than the novelette, "The Fifth Robbery," because its opening chapters deal with the West instead of cosmopolitan New York. Both of the stories, however, contain, in overflowing measure, just the sort of interest that has been referred to. The novelette is recommended as one of the best detective stories that we have ever read. Among the short stories, all of which are strong and vital, attention is specially directed to Miss Marion Hill's "Tackhammer Hurlburt" as a gem of its kind.

In the November number, Mr. Wilson's story will, of course, continue to be the leader. It will be found that its interest grows steadily, paving the way for some highly dramatic scenes which,

at the conclusion, are brought to a fitting climax.

The novelette deserves much more than the slight reference to which our space limits us. It is the work of Mr. Morley Roberts, the author of "The Idlers," a book published here about a year ago, which, in merit, more than held its own with "The House of Mirth." It is entirely reasonable to say that "The Key," which will appear in the November number of AINSLEE'S, is a story equal to either of the two just mentioned.

With these two stories and the short fiction, by Mary H. Vorse, Rose K. Weekes, Joseph C. Lincoln, Owen Oliver, to mention a few, it will be a very distinguished number of the magazine.



The Bobbs-Merrill Company has just published a new book by Hallie Erminie Rives entitled "Satan Sanderson."

The name of the story—which, by the way, should not be allowed to rouse prejudice against it—is the name acquired by the hero, the Reverend Henry Sanderson, during his ante-clerical career as a reckless, daredevil undergraduate. Of course, subsequently, with his assumption of the functions of a shepherd of the sheep, he put aside his worldly inclinations, to the extent, at least, of giving cause for scandal, but he could not entirely escape them, for they came back to mock and defeat him in the person of Hugh Stires, a college friend and follower, who was too weak to struggle against earlier influences.

Both of them had the misfortune to love Jessica Holme, a blind girl and the ward of Hugh's father; and as she preferred Hugh, she was naturally disposed to blame Sanderson for the former's abandoned life. A striking physical likeness between the two men, Jessica's mariage to Hugh, and the recovery of her sight just as her husband was forced to disappear because of a forgery he had committed, involve them all in complications which the author sets herself to straighten out.

It must be confessed that she succeeds

in doing so in an extremely original and entertaining fashion. The predicaments in which Sanderson finds himself involved are brought about largely by his own rather Quixotic notions of moral responsibility, though his very human sentiment regarding Jessica has much more to do with the case than he, apparently, is aware.

The story is to be commended for its undoubted interest, in view of which it would be ungracious to refer specifically to its more obvious defects, for which the average reader will care very little.

The illustrations, by A. B. Wenzell, besides being genuine illustrations, are extremely artistic in the best sense of the word.



In his new book, "A Woman's War," published by Harper & Bros., Warwick Deeping has considerably pruned his hitherto rather luxuriant style with decidedly good results. He has given much more attention to his story than to matters of phraseology and diction, and deserves commendation for his strength of mind in breaking away from the affectations and artificialities of the "old lace school of fiction."

"A Woman's War" is a story of modern English life, and is so called, presumably, because of the struggles in which Catherine Murchison was involved on account of her husband's weakness for alcohol; not a very novel theme, to be sure, but one always capable of producing results in the right hands.

Excepting the virtue of sobriety, we must concede to James Murchison more than the average man possesses. He was a good husband and father and upright citizen and a skilful physician, but in spite of all this his one sin found him out, and, for a time, at least, reduced him and his family to pitiable straits.

His rival, Parker Steel, and the latter's wife Betty, were not slow to take advantage of his fall, and lost no time in reporting the case of Farmer Baxter, who died after Doctor Murchison had sewed him up after forgetting to re-

move a sponge and a pair of artery forceps.

Murchison paid a high price for his final redemption and reinstatement, but he did accomplish it, and circumstances took care of the finishing of Doctor Steel and his wife.

The story is a good one on the whole. There is a substantial plot, and excellent, though by no means remarkable, characterization, and the technique, with two exceptions, cannot be criticized. The description of the autopsy in the case of Baxter, and the inferences obviously to be drawn in the matter of Steel's malady, are realistic enough to be repulsive in a novel.



It is altogether superfluous to say that "A Lost Leader," by E. Phillips Oppenheim, Little, Brown & Co., is an interesting story. So far as we know, Mr. Oppenheim has never written anything that is not interesting.

Unlike many of the author's tales, this is not, strictly speaking, a mystery story, though through most of the book the motive for Lawrence Mannerling's withdrawal from the leadership of the Liberal Party remains something of a mystery. When the explanation finally comes, it is easy enough to see and understand not merely why he gave up politics, but also why he was persuaded to resume his position. It is not, it must be confessed, so easy to sympathize with his sense of obligation to Blanche Phillimore, or to comprehend his vacillation in the matter of England's fiscal policy.

For a man of his supposed strength of character, his dealings with the Duchess of Lenchester show an unexpected inconsistency, and one is not surprised when she makes up her mind, the way being clear, to take the initiative, and yield no further to Mannerling's scruples.

The duchess is, after all, the dominating character in the tale. From what we are permitted to see of her, we cannot wonder at her influence in the councils of the Liberal Party; whether intentionally or not, Mr. Oppenheim has invested her with the qualities that

Mannerling lacks, but ought, by rights, to possess.

Borrowdean plays the part of the villain acceptably, and his exit, as well as that of Blanche, will doubtless be entirely satisfactory to most readers.



Very cheap and tawdry melodrama is the new book of Thomas Dixon, Jr., "The Traitor," published by Doubleday, Page & Co. The author announces it as the closing volume of "The Trilogy of Reconstruction," its predecessors being "The Leopard's Spots" and "The Clansman." It opens with the order of General Forest dissolving the Ku Klux Klan, and "is set in the atmosphere of the fierce neighborhood feuds which marked the Klan's downfall in the Piedmont region of the South."

Doubtless the book will have an ephemeral popularity, but it is not one to be taken seriously as literature. It breathes a pitiful pretentiousness, which, on account of its inherent vulgarity, should be discouraged; it is surcharged with windy epithets and violent denunciation, which imparts weakness instead of the strength the author designs. It is one of those stories in which everything must have its label, like jars in a drug-store.

The story itself is insignificant. The plot is thin and threadbare, and such substance as it has may be found without limit in old newspaper files. It is written with inexcusable carelessness which may be inferred from the fact—on Mr. Dixon's authority, be it understood—that the grandmother of John Graham, the hero, was a bride in 1840, the year he was born.

Graham is, on the whole, a rather decent sort of a fellow; so much so that one can't help having a sense of regret at finding him in such company, and wondering why he is attracted by such a common little creature as Stella Butler. Few readers will agree with Graham's amazement that she should be the child of a coarse "scalawag" such as Judge Butler. Her inheritance is one of the fortuitous consistencies of the book.

Mary van Heyten is hardly representative of the type of "new woman," though her creator, Constance Smedley, has obviously endeavored to make her so in "Conflict," published by Moffat, Yard & Co. Miss van Heyten is too fragile, too emotional, and too careless of her personal appearance to be the woman of achievement. Besides this, the circumstances in which she finds herself at the death of her employer, Mr. Berryfield, are too incongruous to make her subsequent career as the successful owner and manager of a great business consistent or probable.

The strain of competition with "Cuvier's," and the utter lack of business honor which the latter displays, the anxiety stirred by the rebellion of her uncle's wife, Sue Ellestree, constitute a burden which ought not to be imposed upon a sensitive spirit, even in fiction. The logical and inevitable result ought to have been her defeat and withdrawal from the "conflict." But nothing of the sort happens, and she works miracles.

Susan Ellestree's brother, Ferroll, impresses us as being the most attractive character in the story, not merely because he possesses the individual charm which makes him really lovable, in spite of his weaknesses, but because Miss Smedley has apparently given to his portrait a care and attention that she has not bestowed upon the rest. He is consistent in his eccentricities, moral and otherwise.

On the whole, the story is interesting and fresh, two virtues which go far to offset the defects of conception and execution, the unevenness of workmanship, and the lack of clearness in motive.



In some respects, Margaret Potter's new book, "The Princess," Harper & Bros., differs from her previous work, though the emotional quality is more or less dominant, as usual.

It is a story of modern European society, chiefly Russian, in which political, social, and individual intrigue each play an effective part. On the whole, the

book is a rather distressing recital of man's perfidy and woman's patient suffering. A repulsive feature of it is in the relation which the Grand Duke Dmitri and his son Constantine maintain, each without knowledge of the other, with Vittoria Lodi.

It is conceivable, of course, that such things happen in Continental society, but the wisdom of making them the theme of a novel, or, for that matter, even an incident, is, it seems to us, more than questionable. The conclusion of the book leaves the reader a little in doubt as to whether the princess—who is the grand duke's wife and Constantine's mother—or Vittoria is the real heroine.



"The Siamese Cat," by Henry M. Rideout, McClure, Phillips & Co., is an entertaining tale of a girl, a cat, and a ruby. Incidentally there are also a hero and a villain, with a mixture of Chinamen and Malays. With these materials Mr. Rideout has judiciously laid the scene of his story in the Orient, with which he is obviously familiar enough to be aware that almost anything may be told of it without offending his readers' sense of the probabilities.

It was Miss Laura Holborow's desire for a Siamese cat that involved Owen Scarlett in his troubles with Borkman, and exposed him to the peril of secret assassination by the latter's hirelings. Of course, it was all very puzzling to him until he managed to get one of them at a disadvantage and forced the truth from him. Naturally, he was surprised to hear that he and Miss Holborow were carrying around with them, attached to the cat's collar, a priceless ruby which Borkman had stolen.

The story is well told and interesting. It has its amusing, even humorous, side, as well as its suggestion of the tragic. It is also very evenly balanced, and makes easy reading. Scarlett and Miss Holborow are both attractive characters, and Borkman, in spite of his hopeless scoundrelism, is made, toward the end, to display an appreciation, at least, of manliness that mitigates some-

what the reader's bad opinion of him. Artistically, he is the best character in the book.



The Saalfield Publishing Company has brought out, in a volume entitled "Norroy, Diplomatic Agent," the series of stories which appeared some time ago in *The Popular Magazine*, the work of George Bronson-Howard.

They deal with the adventures of one Yorke Norroy, a secret agent in the employ of the state department at Washington, a man of infinite versatility, though to all but a few people he seems little more than "an idle butterfly of fashion." At intervals he disappears from the haunts of society, and only the readers of the book are permitted to share with the government officials the knowledge of where he goes and what he does.

Mr. Bronson-Howard has made no pretense of producing a literary masterpiece, but he has written a series of stories excellent of their kind, sensational and even melodramatic, if you please, but, nevertheless, very interesting and entertaining.



John Reed Scott has at least one bit of novelty in his story, "Beatrix of Clare," which is published by the J. B. Lippincott Company. Very few people would ever have thought of making an idealized hero of Richard III. of England, but Mr. Scott has, apparently in all seriousness, undertaken to do just that.

It was necessary, of course, to ignore the facts of history, therefore the author has carefully rewritten the circumstances of Richard's usurpation, his murder of the princes in the Tower, and brought the story to a conclusion just short of the Battle of Bosworth. He has, on the other hand, developed a royal character that is more or less suggestive of the first Richard.

These aberrations from historical accuracy do not, however, render the story any less meritorious as fiction; as such it has many excellent qualities. It has more life, color, and action than the

average historical novel, and the pages are less burdened with the "'Sdeath" and "Gadzooks" sort of diction.

The love-story of Sir Aymer de Lacy and the Countess Beatrix, of Clare, is the theme of the tale, and there is very little that can be said of it further than that it is a story of a chivalrous age, which ends happily after the lady has been kidnaped by Lord Darby, who plays the part of the villain very acceptably.



Francis Lynde has so far written no book that can be condemned as being actually a poor story. On the contrary, they have all been distinctly good of their kind, especially "The Grafters" and "The Quickening."

A new novel by him has just been published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company entitled "Empire Builders," which is, perhaps, the best of all. Like the others, it deals with the development of the West, and tells of the achievements of Stuart Ford in the extension of the Pacific Southwestern Railroad, of which he is a division superintendent.

He is, of course, a young man, and Alicia Adair is a young woman, who, with her brother, Charles Edward, has inherited an interest in the road.

Charles Edward is, on the whole, the most interesting and attractive personage in the book. A typical gilded youth of the metropolis, he has no aim or ambition in life until Ford comes to New York to lay before the board of directors his great scheme for the expansion of the railroad system. Adair's interest is suddenly concentrated on Ford's plans, more because of the Westerner's energy than for any other reason, and it is through his very efficient help that the latter finally succeeds.

There is no lack of action and incident in the tale. It moves right along without the slightest hesitation, and stops when the end comes, with no tedious explanation and summing up.

It is a first-class American story, one that will not fail to interest and entertain. It first appeared in the *Popular Magazine*.



BURIED TREASURE

Ever Try to Dig It Up?

The biggest boxes of gold are dug up out of a man's keen, healthy, money-making brain. No box of Capt. Kidd's ever held the gold owned by the money-makers of today. And those same money-makers keep the brain strong and healthy for making money, by feeding on GRAPE-NUTS.

This world-famed, ready-cooked food is made of wheat and barley, baked from 12 to 16 hours and is partially digested so that it can be easily absorbed by the weakest stomach.

It contains all the food elements of these field grains, including the Phosphate of Potash Nature places in the outside coat of the grains, for building strong nerves and bright, money-making brains.

The tool that makes money is the brain.

Weak, dull tools don't do good work.

Brain must be fed on the right kind of food to obtain success—that food is

Grape-Nuts

"There's a Reason."

Try it ten days for proof.

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Postum Cereal Co., Ltd., Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.

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The New York Tribune

**Its News and Criticisms Are
of the HIGHEST STANDARD**

**There is no better medium for
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THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE



Are Your Sox Insured?

The Holeproof Bears the Guarantee that Counts

Holeproof Sox wear!—Six months without a hole—Six months without attention from the darning needle. That's what we offer in Holeproof Hosiery.

"We guarantee to any purchaser of Holeproof Sox or Holeproof Stockings that they will need no darning for 6 months. If they should, we agree to replace them with new ones, provided they are returned to us within 6 months from date of sale to wearer."

"That's the second pair of sox I've gone through inside of a week. No manufacturer ever made anything to wear out just as quickly. Guess I'll have to start wearing leather stockings."

Some reader our friend is disgusted. He has a right to expect value and comfort for his money.

And he would get it, too, if he only knew of Holeproof Hosiery.

Holeproof Sox and Holeproof Stockings are handsome in appearance, elastic, and easy to the feet in every way. By using a certain combination of the highest grades of long-fibred yarns, where the hardest usage comes, we are able to knit sox and stockings which will outwear ordinary hosiery *Six to One*. Don't take our say-so, but read what wearers say:

Holeproof Hosiery Co., Newton, Iowa, May 25, 1905.
Gentlemen—Enclosed herewith find \$2.00 in payment of one box of
Women's Holeproof Stockings, as per ad herewith enclosed. Stockings
to be entire black No. 9. I know what the Holeproof Sox are and so
thought would try some of the stockings for myself as seen in the ad
and to compare with my home stockings. Got a box of you last
September, and they are fine. I notice in this ad that you pay all trans-
portation charges. Yours truly, Mrs. Ralph Cunningham.

Holeproof Hosiery Co., Pullman, Wash., May 25, 1905.
Gentlemen—Please find enclosed money order for \$2.00 for which
I wish you would send me a half dozen, all black cotton, men's socks,
No. 11. A year ago last February, I bought a half dozen of these
socks from you and I am using them today. I have never been able
before to secure a sock that would last a month without holes in them. I can honestly say that the goods you put out have no equal.
Respectfully yours, Royal P. Jarvis.

Holeproof Hosiery

Men's Holeproof Sox

Fast Colors—Black, Tan (light or dark), Pearl and Navy Blue. Sizes 9 to 12.

Egyptian Cotton, (medium or light weight) sold
only in boxes containing six pairs of one size—
assorted colors if desired—six months' guarantee
with each pair. Per box of **\$2.00**.....

Women's Holeproof Stockings

Fast Colors—Black, Black legs with white
feet, and Tan. Sizes 8 to 11. Extra rein-
forced garter tops.

Egyptian Cotton, sold only in boxes containing
six pairs of one size—assorted colors if
desired—six months' guarantee with **\$2.00**
each pair. Per box of six pairs.....

CAUTION! In buying, be absolutely positive that you get the original Holeproof goods. Insist upon it to protect yourself. Dishonest manufacturers and dealers are attempting to profit by our success, and are offering worthless imitations under names and in packages as near like Holeproof as they dare. In some instances, dealers even claim that such goods are made by the Holeproof Hosiery Company of Milwaukee. We wish to emphasize most strongly that Holeproof is the only brand we manufacture, and each and every pair of Holeproof Sox or Holeproof Stockings bears our trade mark (registered) plainly stamped thereon.

If your dealer doesn't sell the Holeproof line we will supply you direct upon receipt of price and prepay all shipping charges. Let us know the size you wear, the color you prefer, and remit by money order or draft, or any other convenient way.

Write today for our Free Booklet It's full of interesting convincing facts about Holeproof Hosiery. We will also give you the name of the local dealer in your city.

• **Holeproof Hosiery Company**

50 Fourth Street

Milwaukee, Wisconsin



THIS TRADE MARK
ON EVERY PAIR
GUARANTEES THE
WEARING QUALITY

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



STOPS FALLING HAIR

It is now positively known that falling hair is caused by a germ, hence is a regular germ disease. To stop this falling, the first thing to do is to completely destroy these germs.

Hall's Hair Renewer, revised formula, does this quickly and completely. The principal ingredient for this work is the sulphur. Properly prepared, properly combined, and properly applied, sulphur is a perfect specific for these germs. Other ingredients in the Renewer give aid.

Dandruff is also a germ disease, and may be promptly remedied by the same preparation.

We have just made a complete change in the Hall's Hair Renewer of sixty years' standing: style of bottle, contents, and manner of packing — all completely changed. Ask your druggist for "the new kind."

REVISED FORMULA

Glycerin. Chemically pure glycerin acts as a local food to the hair-bulbs, has marked healing and soothing properties.

Capsicum, Bay Rum. Stimulants and tonics to all the tissues and glands of the hair and scalp.

Tea, Rosemary Leaves. Domestic remedies of especial value in falling hair.

Sulphur. Modern specialists, at home and abroad, tell us this is absolutely essential for the prompt cure of falling hair and dandruff, destroying the germs that cause these diseases.

Benzylglycerin. An antiseptic of high merit.

Alcohol. Stimulant, antiseptic, preservative.

DOES NOT CHANGE THE COLOR of the HAIR

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



PLYMOUTH FURS

Furs and Diamonds

NO two Products are as nearly allied as Furs and Diamonds.

For just as Diamonds vary in Value—just as it is hard to distinguish high Quality Stones from Poor Ones—just as it is difficult to procure “dependable” Diamonds—just as the responsibility of the Firm you buy your Diamonds from indicates the Quality of the Stones—

So does Fur Quality vary, and equally important is the Responsibility of the Fur Company from whom you buy your Furs.

Now Plymouth Furs are high Quality—dependable Furs—

They're made from the very best selected Pelts of the World.

They are thick—brilliant—soft and silky.

Automobile Furs

We have a special department for the making of Modish Automobile Garments (in Fur) for Men, Women and Children from \$25 to \$5,000. The most recent European Styles are rigidly adhered to—selected Pelts employed. Full descriptions of these articles are included in our regular Style Book—sent (free) on request—address herewith.

They will wear better—keep their Color better—retain their brilliancy longer than any other Fur—They are Standard of Furs in this country, all that they are represented to be.

Send for our handsome Fur Style Book—illustrated by Photogravures—we send it (free) upon request. Please write today. Address

PLYMOUTH FUR COMPANY

DEALERS IN HIGH GRADE FURS—ESTABLISHED 1882

Nicollet Avenue & Sixth Street, Minneapolis, Minn.

Including the Fur Sections of "The Plymouth," Minneapolis and St. Paul.

REFERENCES: The Northwestern National Bank, Minneapolis The National Park Bank, New York
The Second National Bank, St. Paul



MINNESOTA COON SKIN COAT
Rich, thick Fur. Body Satin Lined.
Length 48 inches. Price \$75.



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

There
is
Beauty
in
every
Jar



A little care—a little daily attention—and a little Milkweed Cream will give the woman who cares, a perfect complexion

What attention do you give your face and hands? You wash them of course, but that's not enough. Exposure to the weather, to heat and cold, to dirt and dust, indoors and out, to the tainted air of the ball room or the steam of the kitchen, will take the bloom from any complexion. These causes and conditions result in a sallow complexion, make the skin rough, coarsen its texture and unless proper attention is given there comes lasting and unsightly facial blemishes.

Milkweed Cream

Used night and morning has proven to women everywhere that they can have a clear, bright and healthy skin, for it

Improves bad Complexions, Preserves good Complexions.

Milkweed Cream is a skin food with tonic properties. It is dainty, tasteful, refined; just a little applied with finger tips (no rubbing or kneading) clears the minute pores from dust and dirt, stimulates them into natural activity, and through them feeds the inner skin so that a brilliant and glowing complexion is obtained.

Sold by all druggists at 50 cents and \$1.00 a jar, or sent postpaid on receipt of price. A sample will convince you; mailed free for stamp.

**F. F. INGRAM & CO., 63 Tenth Street,
DETROIT, MICH.**



ZODENTA

Is for particular people, for those who care about the little things which add to the appearance of the well groomed man or woman.

It is a dentifrice in paste form different from the ordinary pastes because the ingredients are blended together by intense heat, so that Zodenta is always the same.

It dissolves all injurious deposits which discolor and in time ruin the delicate enamel, causing decayed teeth. It prevents the formation of tartar and destroys all poisons and germs which cause softened and diseased gums.

If your druggist does not keep Zodenta, send us 25 cents for a large (2½ oz.) tube postpaid. Your money returned if you don't like it.

Write for Tooth Brush Holder, mailed free.

**F. F. INGRAM & CO.,
63 Tenth Street
DETROIT, MICH.**

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



THE BEAUTY of WOOLENS

and Flannels lies in their Softness and Fluffiness, and nothing Washable demands such Careful handling in the Wash. Avoid the Rubbing of Soap and Washboard that Mats the Fibres and makes them Hard and Shrunken before their time. Those who care most for Clean — Soft — Unshrunken Woolens and Flannels are Particular to Use PEARLINE according to directions.

Pearline

Directions for Washing
Woolens and Flannels.

"Wash Woolens and Flannels by Hand in lukewarm PEARLINE suds, Rinse thoroughly in Warm Water, Wring Dry, Pull and Shake well, Dry in warm temperature, and they will Keep Soft Without Shrinking."

THE INTERNATIONAL DENTIFRICE

Strong's Arnica Tooth Soap

antiseptic, preserves while it beautifies— sweetens the breath—hardens the gums—whitens the teeth—
A leading dentifrice for a

THIRD OF A CENTURY

The metal package is most convenient for travel or the home. No liquid or powder to spill or waste.

25 Cents—At All Druggists

(Sent postpaid if you have no 10c)

STRONG'S ARNICA JELLY

Isol for sunburn, keeps the skin soft and smooth; does not irritate the skin, relieves burns, scalds and all eruptions. The collapsible metal tube is convenient and unbreakable. If your Dealer has not, send to us. Best price for Arnica Jelly.

25 Cents

ARNICA TOOTH SOAP

Guaranteed under
the Food and Drugs
Act, June 30, 1906;
Serial No. 1612.

C. H. STRONG
& CO.,
CHICAGO, U. S. A.



DUPONT BRUSHES

Made of the best Bristles and Backs, by skilled brush-makers, in a clean and sanitary factory, the largest in the world.

DUPONT BRUSHES

Outlast several ordinary brushes, but Cost no more.

Hundreds of styles in natural Woods, real Ebony, Bone, Pearl, Ivory, etc., for the Hair, Teeth, Face, Hands, Clothes, etc.

If not at your dealer's, kindly write us and we will see that you are supplied.

OUR FREE BRUSH BOOK

tells how to choose, how to clean and properly care for your brushes. Send your address and dealers.

E. DUPONT & CO.,
PARIS, BEAUVAIS, LONDON
New York Office, 35-28 Washington Place



NAME
DUPONT
ON EVERY BRUSH

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

MELBA
The world's foremost soprano sings exclusively for the **VICTOR**

\$10 to \$100. At all leading music houses and talking-machine dealers.

Write for complete catalogues of Victors and Victor Records.

Victor Talking Machine Co.
Camden N.J., U.S.A.

See other Victor advertisements on other pages.

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MARtha WASHINGTON
NEW YORK



29th to 30th Streets Just East of 5th Ave. To remain a Woman's Hotel Exclusively. 1 Block from 28th St. Subway. 29th Street Crosstown cars pass the door.
Over 400 Rooms. Absolutely Fireproof.
Rates \$1.00 per Day and Up
Restaurant for Ladies and Gentlemen. Convenient to Shopping and Theatre District. Caters especially to Women traveling or Visiting New York alone.
SEND FOR BOOKLET.

Also HOTEL WESTMINSTER
16th St. and Irving Place, New York. One Block East of Broadway
A HOMELIKE HOTEL IN A QUIET LOCATION
EUROPEAN PLAN \$1.00 UP AMERICAN PLAN \$3.00 UP
A. W. EACER

PROF. I. HUBERT'S MALVINA CREAM
"The One Reliable Beautifier" Positively cures Freckles, Sunburn, Pimples, Ringworm and all imperfections of the skin, and prevents wrinkles. Does not merely cover up but eradicates them. **Malvina Lotion** and **Ichthyol Soap** should be used in connection with **Malvina Cream**. At all druggists, or sent on receipt of price. Cream, 50c., postpaid; Lotion, 50c., express collect; Soap, 25c., postpaid. Send for free Testimonials.
PROF. I. HUBERT, Toledo, Ohio

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Write Today For This

FREE Pillow Top For Pyrography

Made of beautiful Real Plush, in your choice of Old Gold, Tan, or Light Green Color, and plainly stamped with Colonial Maid Design, with full instructions so that anyone can burn it to our big new catalog into the hands of new customers interested in home beautifying. Given free to every person who sends 25 cents to pay cost of stamping, shipping, etc.

This handsome top buried \$1.50



SPECIAL Our No. 97, \$2.50 Out-fit, only \$1.60

This splendid outfit, partly shown above, is complete for burning on plush, wood, leather, etc. Includes fine Platinum Point, Cork Handle, Rubber Tubing, Double-action Bulb, Metal Union Cork, Bottle, Alcohol Lamp, two pieces Stamped Practice Wood and a convenient all wood near leatherette box. Ask for details and we will send C. O. D. When you send order for No. 97 outfit we include free our 64 page Pelican Instruction Handbook (price 25c), the most complete pyrography book published.

Assortment A Only \$1.75

If bought by the piece would cost you \$2.50. Includes: One Handkerchief Box, size 6x6 inches; one Glove Box, 4x1½ inches; one hand-painted round Jewelry Box; one oval Picture Frame; one American Girl Panel, 8x11½ inches; one oval Match Hanger, 8½ inches high; and three Small Panels in assorted designs, plain or decorated. All made of three-ply basswood and beautifully stamped in late and popular designs, all ready for decorating. If outfit No. 97 and this assortment are ordered together \$3.20

our special price for both is only \$3.20

Write for New Free Catalog A 60

Contains 66 Pages with 1,000 illustrations. The largest pyrography cata-

log ever issued. Write for it today.

THAYER & CHANDLER,
160-164 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Ill.
"Largest Makers of Pyrography Goods in the World."



DEAFNESS "The Morley Phone"

A miniature Telephone for the Ear—invisible, easily adjusted, and entirely comfortable. Makes low sounds and whispers plainly heard. Over fifty thousand sold, giving instant relief from deafness and head noises. There are but few cases of deafness that cannot be benefited.

Write for booklet and testimonials.

THE MORLEY COMPANY, Dept. 72.

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There is no doubt about the **OSTERMOOR**

The Ostermoor Mattress has been proved by every test that human reason demands.

The theory behind it is right—that the best mattress must be built, not stuffed—free from animal hair or anything else unclean and unsanitary.

It has stood the test of time—for over 50 years we have been making Ostermoor mattresses to satisfy a constantly increasing demand.

It has a multitude of witnesses to its excellences. Many thousands have of their own accord sent us letters of gratitude and congratulation over this mattress that induces sleep and ministers to health. The name Ostermoor is to-day a household word, due not alone to our convincing advertisements, but to the good report of it that neighbor has made to neighbor.



Trade Mark
Reg. U.S. Pat.Of.

It has been measured by the laws that rule the business world. Nothing of inferior quality can be sold to the public year after year in increasing quantity. Imitations of the Ostermoor by the score have come and gone. Imitations are now in the field. They too will live only as they have real worth. Their borrowed glory can last but a little day. To protect you we trade mark the genuine with the square label shown below so that you cannot be misled.

WRITE FOR OUR FREE 144-PAGE BOOK AND SAMPLES OF TICKING

30 NIGHTS' FREE TRIAL. You may sleep on an Ostermoor for a month and, if not thoroughly satisfied, have your money back without question. Full particulars in our beautifully illustrated 144 page book—sent free.

WE SELL BY MAIL OR THROUGH 2,500 OSTERMOOR DEALERS

Exclusive Ostermoor agencies everywhere—that is our aim; the highest grade merchant in every place. The Ostermoor dealer in your vicinity—be sure to ask us who he is—will show you a mattress with the "Ostermoor" name and trade mark sewn "on the end." Mattress shipped, express paid by us, same day check is received, if you order of us by mail.

OSTERMOOR & CO., 174 Elizabeth St., New York
Canadian Agency, The Alaska Feather and Down Co., Ltd., Montreal



MATTRESSES COST	
Express Charges Prepaid	
4 feet 6 inches wide, 45 lbs.	\$15.00
4 feet wide, 40 lbs.	13.35
3 feet 6 inches wide, 35 lbs.	11.70
3 feet wide, 30 lbs.	10.00
2 feet 6 inches wide, 25 lbs.	8.35
All 6 feet 3 inches long. In two parts, 50 cents extra.	

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

This \$30.00 Book Case and \$22.50 in Cash Are Yours For the Trying



For 75 Subscriptions you can win this
\$30.00 Book Case and \$22.50 in Cash

The Prizes Are Not
Competitive

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Everybody Can Win This Prize!
There are Hundreds of Others
from which to Choose

Every Subscription Taken
Means a Prize and a Cash
Commission For You

Pianos, Automobiles, Gasoline Launches, Boats, Cameras, Canoes, Kodaks, Typewriters, Jewelry, Silverware, Bicycles, Trip to Japan, Trip to Europe, Three Weeks' Vacation at the Greatest Pleasure Resort in the World. These are some of the prizes to be given away this season.

Don't Fail to Investigate At Once Our Big Offers

There are twenty series of unprecedented premium offers. Each series consists of several prizes of which you can take your choice. There are enough prizes for all.

THE METROPOLITAN MAGAZINE is launching the greatest Subscription Campaign ever inaugurated in the history of the publishing business. We are offering a wonderful series of valuable prizes and liberal commissions this season to representatives who secure subscriptions for the Metropolitan Magazine.

WE WANT WIDE-AWAKE REPRESENTATIVES

THE METROPOLITAN MAGAZINE

Dept. A.I., 3 WEST 29th STREET
NEW YORK

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

HEATHERBLOOM

MADE MARK

PETTICOATS

*In Every Shade
the Styles Demand*

"Women who formerly could afford only one or two perishable silk skirts may now rejoice in four or five dainty ones of Heatherbloom."

—Mrs. Osborn.

Constantly higher in the scale of elegance climbs the rich, durable Heatherbloom petticoat. It reflects fully the wealth of Autumn shades in frocks and gowns.

The highest-priced silk petticoats, expensively embroidered or lace trimmed, are now duplicated in Heatherbloom, and because of their brilliance, their unusual durability, their enduring freshness, are in great demand by smartly gowned women.

We particularly invite your attention to these more elaborate designs. Though reflecting all the rich beauty and advance style of silk petticoats costing \$12 to \$18, the same dainty creations in Heatherbloom cost but \$5 to \$8. These, according to experience at our National Exhibit at Atlantic City, are the most popular with fashionable womankind—the first chosen everywhere. Three times the wear of silk.

Sold by dealers in all the latest shades, in every modish color.

By the Yard

Heatherbloom is obtainable in 150 shades at lining counters—36 inches wide; 40 cents the yard. The ideal material for drop skirts, petticoats, foundations, etc. The trademark Hydegrade on selvage protects you against imitations.

If not at dealer's, write.
Send for booklet **The New Idea in Linings**, free.



Every Petticoat of genuine Heatherbloom bears this label.

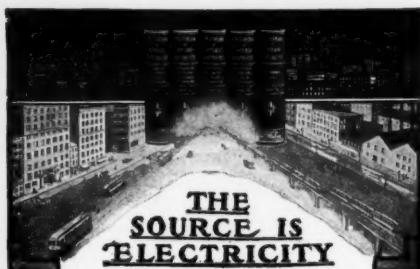


See this trademark on selvage of every yard of piece goods.

A. G. HYDE & SONS, New York-Chicago

Makers of Hydegrade Fabrics

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



Almost every comfort, convenience and luxury of modern life is dependent upon it.

Under these circumstances and with the unlimited opportunities that the study of Electricity offers for advancement, do you think you can make any mistake by devoting a few hours a day to the study of this subject?

CYCLOPEDIA OF Applied Electricity

Five handsome volumes, containing the essence of the most successful methods yet devised of getting a practical knowledge of Electricity at home. Storage batteries—The Telephone—Telegraphy—Trolley Car—Electric Light—Wiring for Light and Power—Burglar Alarms—Door Bells—and hundreds of other daily uses of electricity are explained in a simple manner within the understanding of any intelligent man. All rules and formulae are stated simply and illustrated with diagrams and practical examples. The books have been compiled by practical men for the use of practical men, and contain information that is found only in the private note book of the Superintendent or Foreman.

Free for Inspection

We employ no agents. We believe that our books will sell on their own merit and we give our customers the benefit of the large commissions that are ordinarily paid to agents. Furthermore, to give you an opportunity to see what you are buying, we will send you the books by prepaid express, on one week's approval, if you mention this magazine. Examine them thoroughly and if they are not in every way what you want, notify us and we will send for them at our expense. It does not cost you one penny to see the books and you have one week in which to examine them at your convenience.

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These books are compiled from the best instruction papers in our Electrical Engineering course, and to bring our home study course widely before people interested in electricity, we have made a special price of \$19.80 (regular price \$30.00) until November 1st, payable \$2.00 within one week and \$2.00 per month until the special price of \$19.80 is paid.

2,500 pages, 2,000 Illustrations, diagrams, etc. Substantially bound in three-quarter red morocco leather, handsome marbled edges, fully indexed, size of page 7x10 inches.

200 page hand book giving full information in regard to our Electrical-Mechanical—Steel and Civil Engineering Courses, Architecture, Mechanical Drawing, Structural Drafting, etc. sent FREE on request if you mention Ainslee's, Oct. 1907.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE
CHICAGO



The celebrated "March King" with his band—the finest concert band in the world—makes records only for the

VICTOR

\$10 to \$100. At all leading music houses and talking-machine dealers.

Write for complete catalogues of Victors and Victor Records.

Victor Talking Machine Co.
Camden N. J., U. S. A.



See other Victor advertisements on other pages.

THE WAY TO DOUBLE PLEASURE

NEW JERSEY CENTRAL
POPULAR ROUTE TO

LAKEWOOD
AND
ATLANTIC CITY
FROM NEW YORK

Atlantic City Passengers may stop over at Lakewood without extra charge. Solid Vestibuled Trains—Pullman Coaches. For Booklets send a Two-cent Stamp to W. C. HOPE, General Passenger Agent, New York

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

"The Business of This Place is to Raise Salaries."



Short Stories of Men Who Have Won High Salaries

Nothing ever written contains such dramatic history of success as the stories of the men who, through the help of the International Correspondence Schools, have won higher places in the world. The **voluntary** endorsement of these men proves beyond any question of doubt that training **does pay**—and that the I. C. S. **does** help poorly paid men succeed.

From Chairman to Civil Engineer, with an office of his own, is the happy experience of Mr. G. A. Collins, of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Mr. Collins says: "My earnings have been increased nearly 1000 per cent. The I. C. S. is certainly a wonderful institution."

Another man, Mr. Joseph Cain, once a mine foreman at \$60.00 a month, is now Mine Superintendent at Sears, Ala., earning salary of \$225.00 a month. I. C. S. training did it. Mr. Cain writes: "I know of no other method than the I. C. S. by which a man can advance so quickly and surely."

Now earning a salary of \$100 a week, where before he received but \$3.00 a day, Mr. Chas. E. Norberg, of Los Angeles, Cal., says: "Previous to this, I had only a common school education, but the instruction given was *so plain, so easy to follow, and so practical*, that I have now become a General Contractor, and my earnings range from \$75 to \$100 a week. The I. C. S. is certainly a great blessing to the wage earner."

And so it goes. Yet this is not all. These men do not merely advance but a step or two. They go on, on, on, earning more all the time.

The I. C. S. helps you *in your spare time*. No need to leave home or your present position. Lack of capital need not hinder you. It is immaterial where you live or what you do—the I. C. S. can reach you if you want a better position, more money, promotion.

During July 351 students voluntarily reported salary increases and better positions because of I. C. S. training.

You can learn how it is done by sending the attached coupon to the I. C. S. **No charge whatever for this information.**

Be a Success. Mark the Coupon To-day.

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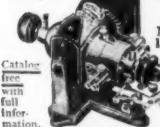
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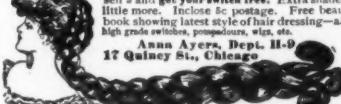
For the Permanent Reduction and Cure of Obesity. Harmless and Positive. **NO FAILURE!** Your reduction is assured—insured to stay. One month's treatment, \$2,000. Mail or office, 1870 Broadway, New York. A PERMANENT REDUCTION GUARANTEED.

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"On Obesity, Dr. Gibbs is the recognized authority."—N. Y. Press, 1899.

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WE WILL TRUST YOU TEN DAYS. HAIR SWITCH
Send a lock of your hair, and we will mail a 2½ or 22-in. short stem fine human hair switch to match. If you find it a big bargain, remit \$1.50 in ten days, or send \$2 and get your switch free. Extra shades a little more. Inclose 2c postage. Free beauty book on sending first switch. Dressing—also high grade switches, pomanders, etc.



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SIXTY YEARS AT WORK
RELIEVING PAIN.

The test of time has only served to strengthen the confidence in POND'S EXTRACT.

SOOTHING, REFRESHING
AND HEALING.

The most useful household remedy.

Ask your druggist for Pond's Extract. Sold only in sealed bottles—never sold in bulk. Refuse all substitutes.

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I'll Restore the
True Color
NATURALLY

Your hair becomes faded, streaked or gray because Nature fails to supply color and strength to the hair roots.

MME. ROBINNAIRE'S WALNUT HAIR DYE

gives the true, natural color to hair and cannot cause dryness or injure the scalp because it is Nature's own dye.

It's a hair tonic too, for it contains strengthening and medicinal properties which restore the hair roots to activity and health. One application brings back the color and rich gloss of youth, and three or four a year keeps it there.

If your druggist has none in stock, I'll send either size bottle prepaid on receipt of price. Address

Trial
Size
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Mme. Robinnaire
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Large
bottle
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THE LATENT SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Bright, sparkling, brilliant. For brilliance the equal of genuine diamonds at ten and puzzle expense. One twentieth the expense. Best free with privilege of examination. For particulars, prices, etc., address

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Dyspeptics

and those suffering from

Stomach Troubles

of the efficiency of

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I will send a

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to any one NAMING THIS MAGAZINE, and enclosing 25c. to pay forwarding charges. This offer is made to demonstrate the efficiency of this remedy.

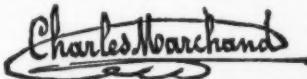
GLYCOZONE is absolutely harmless.

It cleanses the lining membrane of the stomach and subdues inflammation, thus helping nature to accomplish a cure.

GLYCOZONE cannot fail to help you, and will not harm you in the least.

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Sold by leading druggists. None genuine without my signature.

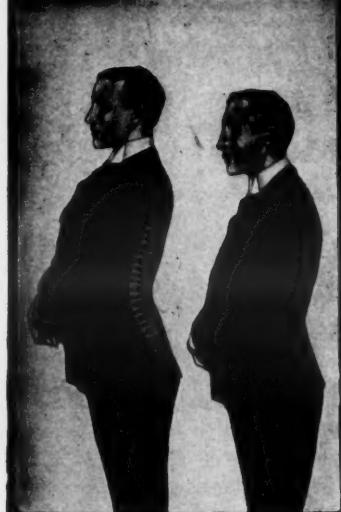


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There is no longer any excuse for any man or woman to look short or stunted. By the Cartilage system you can add from 2 to 5 inches to your height in a matter of days—easily, quickly, safely, comfortably and privately in your own home. It involves no drugs or medical treatments, no heat, electricity or operation, no hard work or unpleasant features, no loss of time and almost no expense. And while it is increasing your height, it will also give you better health, greater energy, more nerve force, as well as broaden your shoulders and improve the proportions of your whole figure.

Here is Proof. Ask your doctor to turn the X-Rays on the body of some friend. Ask him to point out the 23 vertebral sections of the backbone and notice the 23 cushions of cartilage between them. You will find about 19 inches of this cartilage between the head and the feet, and the doctor will tell you that it is elastic and fibrous like muscle.

Now, by the Cartilage system, this Cartilage is increased in thickness by exercise, just as muscles are increased by exercise, only by the Cartilage system the exercising of the cartilage is automatic, with no hard work and as easy as rocking in a rocker. You can increase the muscles in size 75 per cent. You need increase the Cartilage in thickness only 15 per cent to add 2% inches to your height, a very common occurrence. Watch the way that the world is increasing in height or in every other way. It would enable you to see well in a crowd, in church or at the theater; to walk without embarrassment with a taller person, to dance better and give you all the advantages of being well built.

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Write for it to-day. If you are too short, you cannot afford not to ask for this free book. It explains all. Simply address your letter to The Cartilage Co., 89 A, Unity Bldg., Rochester, N. Y.

P. S.—The reason that others are not advertising this simple method, is that the Cartilage system is protected by Patents in the United States and in every other important country in the world.

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If you are suffering from any form of spinal trouble you can be cured in your own home without pain or discomfort. A wonderful anatomical appliance has been invented by a man who cured himself of Spinal Curvature. Its results are marvelous. It is nature's own method. Eminent physicians are endorsing it. The Sheldon Method relieves the pressure at the affected parts of the spine, the whole spine is invigorated and strengthened, all soreness is taken out of the back, the cartilage between the vertebrae is made to expand, the contracted muscles are relaxed and the spine is straightened. There bright hope for you, no matter how long you have suffered. We have strong testimonials from every State in the Union. Each appliance is made to order from individual measurements and fits perfectly. There is positively no inconvenience in wearing. **We guarantee satisfaction and let you use it 30 days.** Write for our new book, giving full information and references.



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BEWARE OF FRAUDULENT IMITATIONS. There is but one genuine OXYDONOR, that has the name of Dr. H. Sanchez engraved in the metal. Look for that name.

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Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

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Is Successfully Employed by the Profession in the Treatment of Inflammation of the Bladder, Albuminuria, Bright's Disease and Uric Acid Conditions. The Long Experience and Many Carefully Conducted Experiments of These Well-Known Medical Men Entitle Their Opinions to Consideration.

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NEW YORK CITY FASHIONS**SUITS or OVERCOATS****\$12.50 to \$25.00**

OUR New Sack Suit in a three or four buttoned style—broad shoulders, athletic effect. Body—loose fitting but shaped to a slight flare and featuring the new long roll lapel and collar fitting close to neck.

Vest. Five buttoned single breasted flange front.

Trousers. Medium wide but fitted shapely on very graceful fashion lines.

Materials. English Worsted, Sergees and Tweeds, Scotch Bannockburns, Plaid, Cheviots, and the very flower of Foreign and America's best mixtures. The latest colors and shades which you must see to appreciate. "Seeing is Believing."

MADE TO YOUR MEASURE

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OUR New Overcoat has all the essentials of Over-coatdom, viz.: Style that conforms in a pleasing way to the motions of the body. In Kerseys, Meltons and Herringbones with the new Fawn shades of Tweed Cheviots, it is bold and masculine looking. Lengths range 34—42, 46 and 52 inches. Luxuriously lined, trimmed and finished.

An overgarment that will stamp any man well dressed and prosperous looking. And will make him feel Confident, Comfortable and Capable.

FREE Catalogue, "New York Styles for Men" and samples of cloth from which to select. Write a postal today and you will receive them by return mail with our complete outfit for taking your own measurements at home. Write today and see what "Made in New York" really means.

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No Agents or Branches.

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President Suspenders 50¢

President Suspenders live long, fit right, and feel easy. Men who wear them are unwilling to take others. That's why so many stores find it necessary to supply Presidents.

There are men all around you who wear President Suspenders. A good many have worn no other kind for years. They will tell you that Presidents are the easiest and strongest of all suspenders.

For comfort and long service Presidents will please you immensely. They're delightfully easy. Bend low or reach high and the back slides freely and gracefully—no tugging or pulling.

Light, Medium and Heavy weight. EXTRA LONG for tall men. SPECIAL SIZE for youths and boys.

If you cannot get Presidents at your home stores, we'll supply you at 50 cents a pair postpaid. We will return your money if you are not satisfied after 3 days wear.

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WE start you making money at once without investment. You can add \$20 and up to your income each week in spare time among your friends and neighbors selling our high grade custom tailored clothes. Our agents are doing this right along. Why not you? Our method absolutely guarantees a good income which grows rapidly. No experience necessary. We give satisfaction to your customers or money back without argument. Set of samples (FREE) of newest fabrics for made-to-order, strictly High Grade, but low cost, smart Suits and Overcoats, 1907 Fall and Winter Styles. We employ only skilled Journeyman tailors, which assures unexcelled fit, genteel appearance and lasting shape for half what you would pay elsewhere. No trouble to take orders when you show our samples in neat folders that fit the pocket.

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Write today for Samples, Style Chart, Complete Free Outfit and liberal terms to agents and get busy while everybody is thinking about Fall and Winter Clothes. It's easy, pleasant and profitable work.

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\$75.00

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If you want a diamond, write us and you'll get it—enjoy the pleasure of wearing it now and pay as you earn. Select the diamond you like, we'll send it to our gemmologist to put right; you'll have the stone and decided that it's a beauty and you want it. Then send us, say a fifth of its price and the balance you can pay in small amounts as you find convenient.

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The very finest pure white gems. Few jewelers even carry in stock a grade of diamonds equal to the Marshall "F" Grade. These diamonds are perfect in cut and color and of scintillating pure white beauty. For instance, here is an "F" Grade diamond ring in Tiffany's setting for only \$55.00 (payable \$5.00 a month or 8 per cent discount for cash) and cash price \$77.10.

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Tear off this coupon now and get our special Air Mail Circular.

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CHOCOLATE
Krunch

A new confection — something that will prove a delightful surprise to any palate. An enticing piece of golden taffy hidden in a coating of velvety chocolate. Just sweet enough — just brittle enough — just different enough to please everybody.

Sold everywhere in ten, twenty-five and fifty cent packages. If you cannot secure them, a ten cent package will be sent postpaid on receipt of price.

Made by the originators of Trowbridge Chocolate Chips.



*Every drop is delicious of this famous old wine,
It has got all the vigor and vim of the vine;
No wines of French vineyards such virtues contain;
It's the joy of best judges—Great Western Champagne.*

Great Western was the only American Champagne to receive a Gold Medal at Paris—and was acknowledged by Parisians to equal the most select imported brands. In



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you will recognize the taste of the Old World's best vintages—at half the cost. It's the duty, not the quality, that makes the difference. The quality of grapes is what imparts to fine Champagne its flavor. Particular care in making and ageing is essential, but the fine rich, mellow, yet delicately flavored grape, is necessary.

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Cultivation of the soil, extending over nearly one hundred years, in the Great Western Vineyards at Rheims, N.Y., has developed the ideal vine that produces this fine wine grape. The process of making Great Western is identical with that of the finest French wines. It is absolutely pure and is aged for five years in the latest improved modern cellars.

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Sold by dealers in fine Wines and served in
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For Old Age

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Glowing and sparkling with vitality, it is the staunch vigor of barley malt and hops, rich in the tissue-building qualities of the former and the splendid tonic properties of the latter. This highly nutritious liquid food, in its palatable and predigested form, is welcomed and retained by the weakest stomach, being easily assimilated by the blood and carries in it those properties that revitalize and rebuild the muscles and nerve tissues.

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\$8.95

FOR \$8.95 we furnish this genuine New England 12-gauge Double Barrel Hammerless Breech Loading Shotgun, the exact same gun that has been sold everywhere at \$25.00 to \$30.00.

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These guns come in 12 gauge only, with

taper choke bored by the celebrated Taper system, reinforced breech, extension rib, double bolt action, high grade full case hardened and finished box frame, automatic breech, fancy full checkered pistol grip, walnut stock, walnut checkered fancy fore end.

safety, fancy full checkered pistol grip, walnut stock, walnut checkered fancy fore end.

This is a genuine New England hammerless double barrel 12-gauge breech loading shotgun. UNDERSTAND IT'S A HAMMERLESS GUN AND NOT A HAMMER GUN, and if you are familiar with the hammerless guns, you will know a hammerless gun for use IS WORTH TWICE AS MUCH AS A HAMMER GUN.

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WE FURNISH this A. J. Aubrey hammerless double barrel breech loading shotgun with genuine imported Liege full finished twist barrels for \$13.85, or with the highest grade, genuine imported Liege full finished twist barrels for \$14.85, or with extra high grade genuine Liege two-blade Damascus barrels for \$17.35.

then pay the express agent our special price and express charges, less the \$1.00 sent with your order, you can use it three months, during which time you can put it to every possible test, and if you are not perfectly satisfied with it, or used, or worth at least twice as much as any double hammerless gun, we will immediately refund your money, together with any express charges you may have paid; or if you order the New England gun at \$8.95, \$10.95 or \$12.95, you can give it thirty days trial, during which time you can put it to every test, and if for any reason you are not perfectly satisfied with your purchase, if you don't feel you have gotten double the value you could have gotten elsewhere, you can return the gun to us at our expense, and we will immediately refund your money, less the express charges and express charges, less the \$1.00 sent with your order for either gun you will save the extra express charges in returning the C. O. D. money to us.

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HOOSIER OAK

IT PAYS BIG
To Amuse The
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NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY as our Instruction Book and "Business Guide" tells all. We furnish Complete Outfits with Big Advertising Posters, etc. Humorous dramas brimful of fun, travel, history, religion, temperance and other subjects. We also furnish a most astonishing opportunity in any locality for a man with a little money to show in churches, school houses, Lodge halls, theatres, etc. Profits \$10 to over \$100 per night. Others do it for us. Write to us and we'll tell you how. Catalogue free.

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Reliable, Reversible, Two Cycle.
Two and Three Port.
Guaranteed for one year.
Sample motor only 25 cents.
Our Catalog K's is worth your having.
Send 10c. in stamps for our Book entitled
"Ignition, Vaporization, Installation and Operation of a Gasoline Motor."

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The problem of shaving has always been a troublesome one with most men. Those who depend on the barber find it expensive—a waste of time and disagreeable in many ways—without taking into account the danger of infection from unsanitary conditions.

This little razor, "The Gillette," has solved the problem for all time.

There is no reason why every man should not shave himself.

The difficulties have all been overcome by the "Gillette."

It requires no stropping or honing, is always sharp and in perfect condition. Its adjustment is positive and its work is perfect.

The blades are so inexpensive that they can be thrown away when dulled.

The Gillette Safety Razor consists of triple silver plated holder—12 double-edged blades, packed in velvet lined leather case. Price \$5.00.

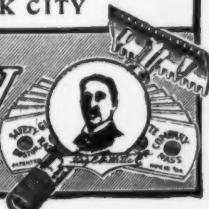
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Write for our Illustrated Booklet

GILLETTE SALES COMPANY

255 Times Building
NEW YORK CITY

**Gillette Safety
Razor**
NO STROPPING NO HONING



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for Good-bye."

Young at Forty

Good Health and a Charming Personality

MANY a woman has surprised her husband and friends by giving 15 minutes a day in the privacy of her own room to special directions which I give to her for the care of health, face and figure. Over 25,000 women have studied themselves under my direction in the past five years.

Are You Tired of Drugs?

I use no drugs. I study each woman's case just as a physician studies it, the only difference being that I strengthen and put in place weakened organs by exercise for nerves and muscles controlling such organs, bring a good circulation of warm blood which I purify by teaching correct breathing and by prescribing the special diet, bathing, etc., adapted to each individual. I strengthen *all your vital organs, lungs, heart, nerve centers*, and send your blood bounding through your veins as when a child.

I develop or reduce your figure to correct proportions. I teach you to stand and to walk with an ease and dignity which at once bespeak culture and refinement.

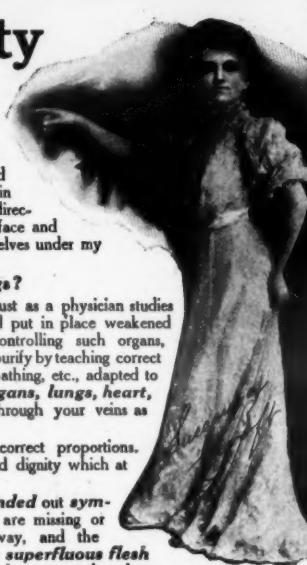
Clear Skin and a Good Figure Every figure can be rounded out symmetrically unless bones are missing or

tissues entirely wasted away, and the woman who carries from 20 to 100 pounds of *superfluous flesh*—every time she moves has my sympathy—but she does not need to do so—and surely it is every woman's privilege and duty to keep herself attractive and pleasing.

How to Stand and Walk When you request details about my lessons, I send you, Free, a booklet showing how to stand and walk correctly, with a card of correct pose for your dressing table.



Miss Cocroft at Her Desk



The following are some of the ailments I correct. For details about my personal instruction, write me which symptoms apply to your case. If you are suffering from any other ailment write me fully and I will frankly tell you, without charge, if I can help you.

Too short
Thin bust
Thin chest
Thin arms
Thin neck
Round shoulders
Supernumerary flesh
Prominent hips
Protruding abdomen
Height
Weight
Do you stand correctly
Complexion
Do you walk gracefully
Weakness
Lumbago
Dullness
Irritable
Nerves
Headaches
Cough
Dizziness
Indigestion
Constipation
Loss of appetite
Kidneys
Lungs
Heart
Throat
Glands
Rheumatism
Circulation
Blood

Is your health or figure imperfect in any way not mentioned here?
Occupation?
What is your age?
Married or Single?

Give me your full name and address, writing very clearly, please.

Write me TODAY!

What My Pupils Say of My Work

I wish every nervous teacher could know what benefit is to be derived from your physical culture. I have lost 73 pounds, and was never better. My billowing coat is entirely relieved. Just think of it! I have lost 73 pounds since I began with you, from 112 to 137½ lbs. in one year. My catarrh and lungs are much better and my body, which was a bony, crooked structure, is actually beginning to look like your picture of correct pose. My head is steady, the confused feeling having gone. It is the best money ever spent for myself. Just think, Miss Cocroft, before I took up your work I could not eat anything without the greatest distress, and now I think I could digest tacks. I am so happy.

Personal Instructions Write me fully, also letting me know your faults of figure, etc. I will make a personal study of your case and will let you know whether I can help you or not. Your letter will be held in strict confidence. I never publish letters without special permission, though I can send you hundreds of testimonials from women I have helped, who have given me permission to show their letters.

SUSANNA COCROFT, Dept. 34, 57 Washington St., Chicago
Author of "Growth in Silence," "Character as Expressed in the Body," Etc.

NOTE—Miss Cocroft, as President of Physical Culture Extension Work in America, needs no further introduction.

I Teach Sign Painting

Show Card Writing or Lettering by mail and guarantee success. Only field not overcrowded. My instruction is unequalled because practical, personal and thorough. Easy terms. Write for large catalogues.

**CHAR. J. STRONG, Pres.,
Detroit School of Lettering**
Dept. 22, Detroit, Mich.

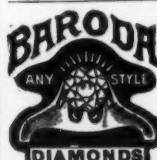
"Oldest and Largest School of Its Kind."



DO YOUR FEET ACHÉ?

The Scholl Tri-Spring Arch Support is guaranteed to overcome all foot ailments. Cures flatfoot, weak or broken down arches, weak ankles, and instantly relieves tired, aching feet. Worn in any shoe. Made of finest Spring German Silver and oak leather. Price 50 cents. Write for free illustrated booklet.
The Scholl Mfg. Co., 83 Market St. Chicago.

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**FLASH LIKE GENUINE
DAY OR NIGHT.** You can own a Diamond equal in brilliancy to any genuine Stone at one thirtieth the cost.

**BARODA DIAMONDS
IN SOLID GOLD RINGS**

stand acid test and expert examination. We guarantee them. See them first, then pay. Catalogue Free. Patent Ring Measure included for FIVE two-cent stamps.

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PERSONAL CARTOONING CORRESPONDENCE
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JAP-A-LAC

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

A STAIN AND VARNISH COMBINED



JAP-A-LAC produces the finest finish on old and new FLOORS.

With JAP-A-LAC you can renew the finish on any floor, in a short space of time, and at a trifling cost. The surface will be as hard as flint, and as smooth as glass. JAP-A-LAC "wears like iron". Heel prints will not mar it, nor show white on it. A JAP-A-LAC-ED floor is easily kept clean.

Besides Natural (clear) JAP-A-LAC, there are fifteen beautiful colors, for refinishing everything about the house from cellar to garret; Interior Woodwork, Furniture, and all things of wood or metal.

For Sale by Paint, Hardware, and Drug Dealers. All sizes from 15c to \$2.50

A WARNING AGAINST THE DEALER WHO TRIES TO SUBSTITUTE.

Some dealers will not buy JAP-A-LAC so long as they can substitute something else on which THEY MAKE MORE PROFIT. If your dealer offers you a substitute, decline it. He will get JAP-A-LAC for you if you insist on it.

Write for beautiful illustrated booklet, and interesting color card. FREE for the asking.

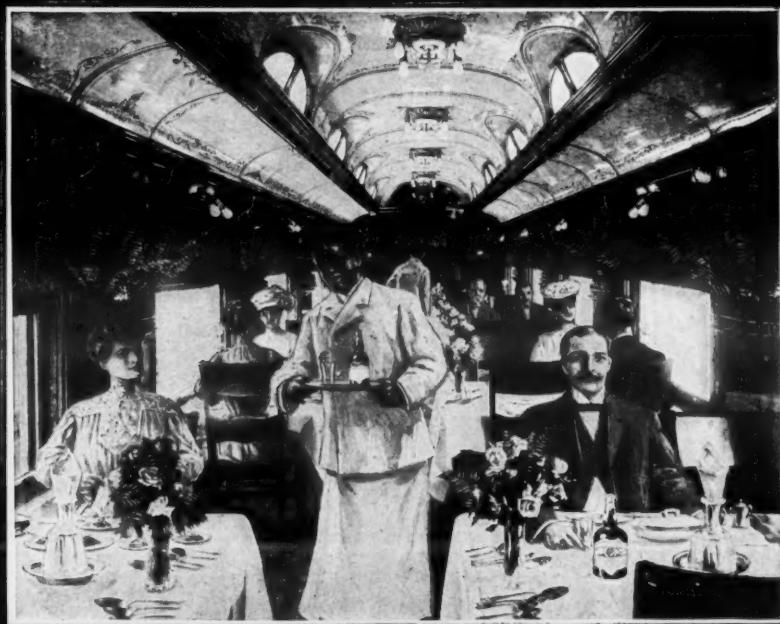
If building, write for our complete Finishing Specifications. They will be mailed free. Our Architectural Green Label Varnishes are of the highest quality.

*The Glidden
Varnish Co.*

1020 Rockefeller Bldg., Cleveland, O.

If YOUR dealer does not keep JAP-A-LAC, send us his name and we (except for Gold, which is 25c) to cover cost of mailing, and we will send FREE Sample, (quarter pint can) to any point in the United States.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



ANHEUSER-BUSCH'S
Malt-Nutrine

IN SPLITS

is served on Pullman and Dining Cars and on
Ocean and Lake Steamers.

Travel sickness, on land or sea, is immediately
relieved by its use. Malt-Nutrine is a tonic and
liquid food easily retained by the weakest stomach.

Prepared by

Anheuser-Busch, St. Louis, Mo.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Shawknit

TRADE MARK



For those of our friends who do not know that Shawknit socks are made in over 100 styles, we have had prepared at a great expense, a most interesting and attractive catalog showing many of our styles in realistic color effects.

By possessing one of these catalogs, you may keep in touch with the latest styles and may order direct, should your local dealer be unable to provide them.

We will gladly send you one of these catalogs, if you will write for it. It is, we think, the handsomest stocking catalog ever issued. No expense has been spared to make it so.

We show below a special assortment of plain colors, stripes, embroideries and White interior cotton socks put up in a neat package consisting of one-half dozen, styles as follows:

Style 35S. Rich Navy Blue.
" 1959. Absolutely Fast, SNOW-BLACK.

" DD. Navy Blue Ground with White Hair Line Stripes.

Style 19P20. SNOW BLACK, embroidered with small figures in cardinal silk.

Style 38P10. Rich Navy Blue, embroidered with small figures in white silk.

Style 5P1. Rich, Dark Oxford mixtures outside, sanitary pure white in-side.

SHAW STOCKING COMPANY, 30 Shaw St., Lowell, Mass.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Columbia Records

It's easy enough to *argue* the tone quality of a musical record, but it's distinctly another thing to carry out all the delicate and intricate processes of recording and making so that the quality shall appear unmistakably in every vibration of the reproducer.

We are arguing Columbia Record quality as earnestly as we know how—but we are even more earnestly asking you right along to make *comparisons*.

Maybe we might not be so keen about it if we didn't know what your decision would be.

We know well enough that if it once comes to comparisons no other records can possibly equal Columbia Records in any single point—smoothness, sweetness, volume, accuracy, evenness, or durability.

Prove it!

Go into any of the 9000 Columbia Stores and listen!

**COLUMBIA PHONOGRAPH CO., General,
Tribune Building, New York.**

STORES IN ALL PRINCIPAL CITIES.

Agents wanted wherever we are not now represented.

Main Branches, 35-37 W. 23d St., New York; 88 Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Ill.; 526 McAllister St., San Francisco.

Grand Prix, Paris, 1900.
Double Grand Prize, St. Louis, 1904.
Grand Prize, Milan, 1906. Highest Award, Portland, 1905.



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

\$1000.00

Per Year for Life

If you are in good health, approximately this amount or a larger or smaller sum can be assured to you by a contract giving you and your wife a life income, beginning at the end of stipulated period and continuing as long as either shall live, or giving your wife a life income beginning immediately if you die.

The Mutual Life Insurance Company

invites investigation from those who would like to make sure the welfare of their loved ones. It invites investigation of its assets, of its policies, of its rates, and just now especially of the savings made and being made by its new management.

How would you like \$1000 per year for life?
Send for folder showing who have tried this method and how they like it.

The Time to Act is NOW.

For the new forms of policies, write to

**The Mutual Life Insurance
Company of New York,
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Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



PEARS' SOAP

An Indian crystal gazer or any close observer will tell you that the secret of a clear, healthy skin is in a constant use of Pears' Soap—also that Pears' will show you how good a complexion nature intended you to have.

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.
"All rights secured."

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**"ALL MY TEETH ARE WISDOM TEETH
BECAUSE
IT IS WISE
TO USE**

RUBISOAM

Its beauty, fragrance and convenience make the use of the delicious liquid dentifrice **RUBISOAM** a delight. Wise and timely mouth-care with this perfect antiseptic cleanser purifies, preserves and beautifies Nature's priceless pearls.

25 cents at Druggists.

SAMPLE FREE, ADDRESS, E.W. HOYT & CO., LOWELL, MASS.

Hasn't scratched yet!!!

Bon Ami

A SCOURING SOAP
A METAL POLISH
A GLASS CLEANER

The Best Scouring Soap Made
(14 y'r's age m'k t.)

Miss Nervis Hedake: "I wonder if it really is Coffee that keeps me sallow, skinny and sick most of the time."

Miss Comfort: "I used to do a bit of wondering, too, until I tried it out by quitting Coffee and using **Postum**."

"**THERE'S A REASON**"
for **POSTUM**

Postum Cereal Co., Ltd., Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.

